AN

ESSAY

ON

RIDICULE.

Jocandi recte ſapere eſt principium et fons.

LONDON:
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MDCCLIII.

94 a 14

THE

INVESTIGATOR.

Containing the following TRACTS:

I. ON RIDICULE.

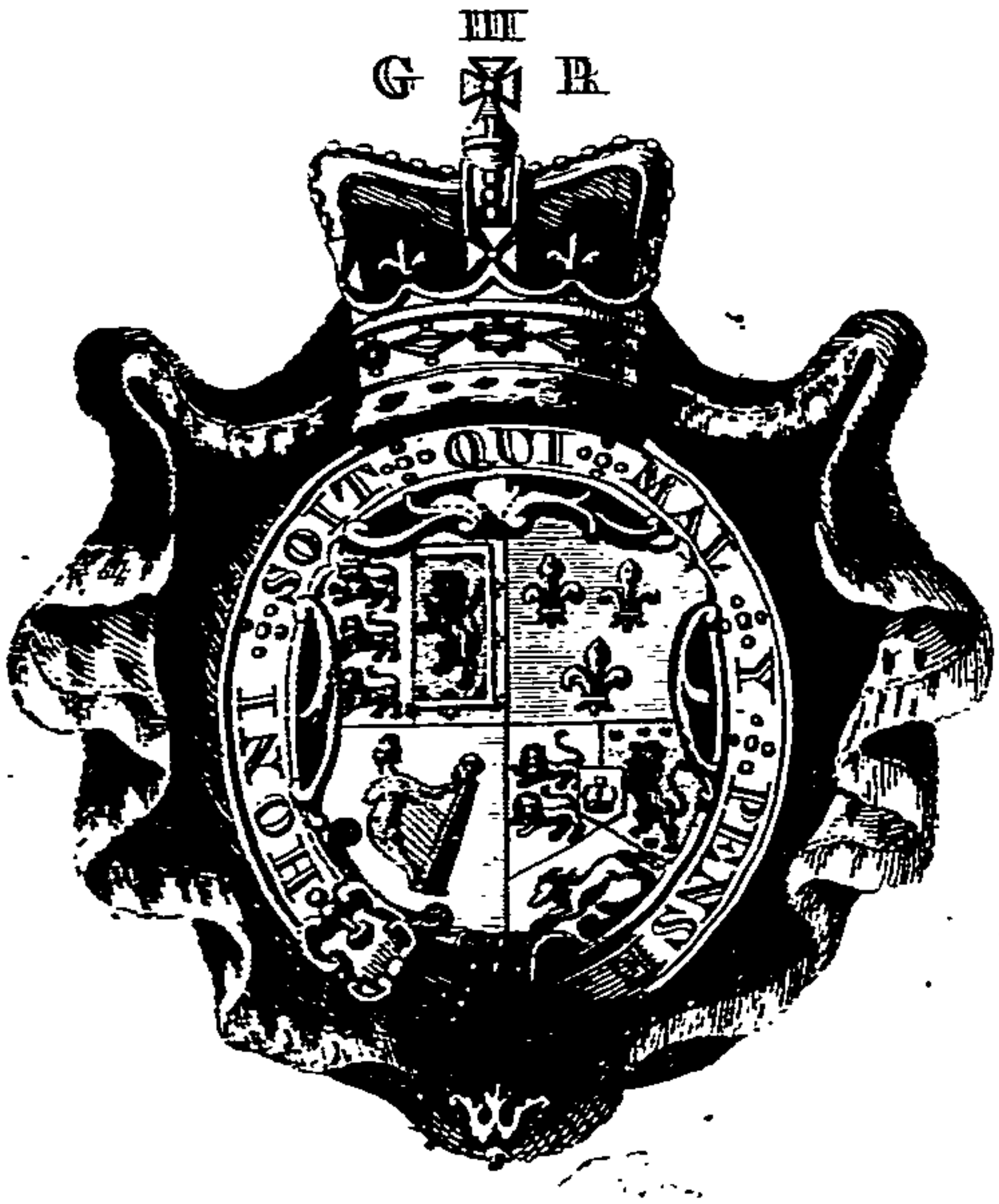
II. ON ELIZABETH CANNING.

III. ON NATURALIZATION.

IV. ON TASTE.

Δοξα μεν ανθρωποισι κακον μεγα, Πειρα δ' αριστον.
THEOGNIS.

LONDON:
Printed in the Year MDCCLXII.


HIC
G R
SOLIT QUI MAL PENSENT

Advertisement.

THE following Eſſay was written by a man of buſineſs, for his winter evening's amuſement, and belongs to a ſeries of tracts, all tending to ſhew the uſefulneſs and neceſſity of experimental reaſoning in philological and moral enquiries.

As he is but a young trader in the way of literature, and his goods of a fabric ſomewhat new, he does not think it prudent to riſque much of his ſtock upon one bottom. From the returns of approbation, which he ſhall receive from this ſmall venture, he will be better enabled to judge what

what the demand is at market; and will then know, with ſome degree of certainty, whether he ought to export any more of the ſame kind; whether he ſhould work up the materials, ſtill on his hands, in another faſhion; or, which is moſt likely to happen, whether he had not better reſerve them altogether for home conſumption.

CON-

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AN ESSAY ON RIDICULE.

PART I.

SECTION I.

AFTER a curious ſubject has been unſucceſsfully treated by philoſophers, poets, phyſicians, and divines of reputation, it might ſeem preſumptuous in one to attempt it, whoſe neceſſary ſtudies have been of a nature little connected with deep erudition, and who has but few hours of leiſure, from his ordinary occupation, to put together the little he may have accidentally pickt up; were it not known,

PART I. at the ſame time, that many valuable and ſurpriſing diſcoveries have accrued to mankind by the means of thoſe from whom they were leaſt to be expected. It is a trite obſervation, that printing was diſcover'd by a ſoldier, and gun-powder by a monk; from which, and many other inſtances, we may conclude, that the moſt extraordinary inventions were rather the effect of chance and ſubſequent trial, than of any profound forethought and contrivance.

The queſtion, *whether Ridicule be a teſt of truth*, is one of thoſe which have divided the learned for ſome years paſt, without producing any thing ſatisfactory, for or againſt it; and if I ſhould in the following ſheets caſt any new light upon the ſubject, it is by means not unlike thoſe of the diſcoverer of gun-powder. He felt, when perhaps his reflection was otherwiſe employed, that this compoſition had an uncommon force and quickneſs, called to mind what were its ingredients, and was only the hiſtorian of his crucible.

Thoſe who have already handled the ſubject of Ridicule, have taken a very different method,

method, and, instead of examining what it was composed of, have not so much as settled, with any precision, what the thing was which one party so much extolled, and the other so much depreciated. SECT. I.

Lord SHAFTSBURY, who, by his recommending Ridicule as a test of truth, first gave rise to this controversy, expresses himself so variously, that it is as hard to guess what he means to recommend, as upon what grounds. In his *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*, he opposes it to formality, gravity, and melancholly, and calls it chearfulness, pleasantry, and good humour. Chearfulness is certainly an excellent quality in itself, and a disposition of mind very proper for those who are to enter into any enquiry; but how it should any way be a test of truth, more than a test of gold, wine, silk, or other valuable commodity, it is difficult to conceive. In his *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, where one expects to see something more explicit, he rather seems to retract what he had so warmly asserted; speaks of bounds and limitations to this test of truth; hints at *a kind of defensive raillery*

PART I. which is, as he explains it, ſome evaſive method to keep truth, when diſcovered, from certain perſons. And altho' he had ſaid in his *Letter on Enthuſiaſm* *, *'Tis only in a free nation, ſuch as ours, that impoſture has no privilege, and that neither the credit of a court, the power of a nobility, nor the awfulneſs of a church, can give her protection, and hinder from being arraign'd in every ſhape and appearance*: yet, in his *Eſſay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, he jumbles raillery, burleſque, and ridicule together, and makes them the neceſſary language of ſlavery †.

Non tali auxilio nec defenſoribus iſtis----

As this very ingenious nobleman has been commonly looked upon as the great patron and ſupporter of Ridicule, I thought it incumbent upon me to point out in a few words, how he has, or rather how he has not treated it. Thoſe who want to ſee a more full examination of what his lordſhip has advanced upon that head, will find it in

* Sect. II. near the beginning.

† Sect. IV. at the end.

a book

SECT. I.

a book of *Eſſays* lately publiſhed, in oppoſition to his opinions in general *. But altho' I agree with the writer of thoſe *Eſſays* in many of his remarks upon what Lord SHAFTSBURY has advanced concerning Ridicule; yet I ſhall take the liberty to diſſent from him with regard to the ſubject itſelf: which I ſhall endeavour to prove to be what his Lordſhip at firſt aſſerted; one of *the teſts of truth* (by its detection of falſhood) and, as ſuch, to be indulged without any limitation.

I am extremely ſenſible how difficult it is, even for the beſt writers, to convey their ideas with certainty by the means of general terms only. I ſhall therefore, in the proſecution of this work, endeavour to aſcertain my meaning by the help of examples; ſo that, if I ſhould happen to mean nothing to the purpoſe, (a thing very common among eſſay writers) it will be immediately apparent.

Had the celebrated writers who have exerciſed their pens upon the different ſides of

* *Eſſays on the Characteriſticks*, by JOHN BROWN, M. A. ſecond edition.

PART I.

this controverſy, taken to the tract here pointed out, to wit, the examination of the various examples of Ridicule, as they really exiſt in the works of men of acknowledged wit; it is ſcarce poſſible but that they muſt, long e'er now, have come to a better underſtanding. They could not have ſpent much time in the ſcrutiny, without obſerving, that there are two ſorts of Ridicule; one of which is employed in diſcuſſing propoſitions, or matters of enquiry; and another, which has manner and actions for its province. A complaiſance both for the vulgar language, and for that which has been uſed by the beſt authors, obliges one to call both theſe things by the name of Ridicule; tho' it will appear, that their nature and properties are very different. I ſhall therefore treat of them ſeparately, beginning with that kind which is employed in matters of enquiry; becauſe it is the moſt important in itſelf, and becauſe it is that which gave riſe to this controverſy; being the only kind of Ridicule which can ſo much as pretend to be admitted as a teſt of truth.

Whatever then may hereafter befal the other, this Ridicule may be defin'd, *the art of*

of ſhewing that to be ridiculous which is imagined to be ſo. Perhaps I ſhall be told by ſome body, that this is the proper office of reaſon and argument. Whoever he be, I moſt heartily agree with him; having long thought that thoſe advocates for Ridicule, who ſet it in oppoſition to reaſon, did its cauſe very little honour or ſervice. I likewiſe join with the author of the *Eſſays on the Characteriſticks*, in placing Ridicule among the modes of eloquence; but as he has choſen to ſeparate eloquence from argument, I muſt endeavour to reconcile them, before I can hope to have Ridicule received as a teſt of truth; a praiſe, which is certainly due to argument alone.

SECT. I.

AN ESSAY

SECTION II.

PART I.

THE Eſſay writer, in his diviſion of the ſeveral kinds of compoſition, has aſſigned to argument the province of convincing by reality; and to eloquence, that of perſuading by fictitious appearances. That is, that eloquence or oratory is, ſome how or other, the art of dazling or deceiving the underſtanding.

I do not profeſs in this Eſſay, as he has done in thoſe he has publiſhed, to criticiſe the opinions of any author, except where my ſubject calls upon me; elſe I ſhould perhaps be able to ſhow, that what he advances, with regard to eloquence, might very well paſs for a ſatire upon publick ſpeaking in general, and upon that from the pulpit in particular. Indeed, to do him juſtice, he does not continue long in that opinion; but having ſufficiently decried eloquence, in order to condemn Ridicule as one of its accomplices, he afterwards makes it amends, by acknowledging that eloquence is of the moſt excellent ſort, when it is found-

ed

ed upon argument drawn from the real ex- SECT.
iſtence of things; ſo that there is no diffi- II.
culty in concluding, that what he before ſaid of eloquence in general, is only true of falſe eloquence.

But there is nothing in all this learned perplexity about *eloquence* and *argument*, *conviction* and *perſwaſion*, *judgment*, *paſſion* and *imagination*, but what may be eaſily unravel'd; provided we do not ſuffer ourſelves to be intangled in other people's opinions, but examine into the nature of the ſubject itſelf. I will therefore enter upon it as if it had never been touched before; at the ſame time with that brevity which becomes an epiſode, and an epiſode which perhaps is very little neceſſary.

Eloquence is the art of convincing and perſuading. Theſe two properties of eloquence do not ſo much denote two different kinds of it, as the two different purpoſes to which it may be applied. This will appear from an enquiry into the proper meaning and application of the words, and likewiſe from the practice of the beſt orators.

When

PART I. When any opinion is to be examined, or any aſſertion to be proved, then the ſole aim of oratory is to convince. When any action is to be performed, or let alone, then the aim of oratory is to perſuade. We ſay, *perſuade to a thing*, in this latter caſe; and *convince of a thing*, in the former. Whenever a truth is to be inveſtigated, the underſtanding alone is concerned; and therefore eloquence applies itſelf to the underſtanding only, with intention to convince. Whenever an action is to be promoted, eloquence applies itſelf to the two ſprings of human action, the underſtanding and the paſſions, alternately; endeavouring both to convince and perſuade. From this neceſſity of mixing the argumentative eloquence on occaſions of perſuaſion, the word *perſuaſion* receives a double ſignification; for it is common to ſay *perſuaded of a thing* as well as *perſuaded to it:* whereas the argumentative eloquence being ſimple and uncompounded, the word *convince* cannot be applied to any, but its own peculiar purpoſe of convincing the underſtanding of the truth or falſhood of a poſition. It was therefore from its more comprehenſive uſe, and by way of abbreviation, that eloquence

quence was called by ſome great men, the *art of perſuaſion*, taking *perſuaſion* both in its proper and leſs proper ſenſe *. And, had either CICERO or QUINTILIAN, put the art they taught in ſo ridiculous a light, as to deny, that it was likewiſe *the art of convincing by argument* †; we ſhould, *ipſo facto*, deſpiſe their

SECT. II.

* Much of that ſort of cunning nonſenſe, uſually called wit, owes its being to the corruption and abuſe of language. The double meaning of the word *perſuadere* gave birth to that quaint expreſſion recorded of St. AUGUSTIN, *Non perſuadebis, etiamſi perſuaſeris*: which has no meaning at all, or only means, *Although you ſhould convince me of the truth of what you advance, yet you ſhall never perſuade me to take any ſtep in conſequence of ſuch conviction.* The ſelf ſame phraſe is to be found in the *Plutus* of ARISTOPHANES; where one of the old men ſays to POVERTY, in anſwer to her harangue, ΟΥ ΓΑΡ ΠΕΙΣΕΙΣ ΟΥΔ' ΗΝ ΠΕΙΣΗΣ, and is explained as above by the Greek ſcholiaſt upon that paſſage.

† There cannot certainly be a more abſurd attempt than that of perſuading in matter of ſpeculation without argument; and yet there are frequent phænomena that apologize, in ſome meaſure, for thoſe who think it both practicable and eaſy. They may have perhaps obſerved the multitude perſuaded of the truth of what the orator aſſerted, when there was nothing in his diſcourſe that had the leaſt appearance of argument; nay, when it was quite unintelligible.

This

PART II. their teſtimony, as coming from men whoſe profeſſion was to deceive.

Of

This is, no doubt, a common fact; tho' it is not owing to any deluſive power of eloquence upon the imagination and paſſions, but acts by the bare force of perſonal credit and authority. The orator, by ſounding periods, learned terms, a pompous manner, an earneſtneſs of geſture, and a look of ſincerity, convinces thoſe ſimpletons (for upon no other audience will ſuch oratory paſs) that he is a great, a learned, and an honeſt man; and then uſes this credit, ſo acquired, to faſten any opinion he pleaſes upon them. But this ridiculous ſort of prepoſſeſſion is not peculiarly the conſequence of eloquence; it will be found to follow alſo upon rank, riches, and many other advantages, where no ſuperiority of ſpeech or underſtanding is pretended: whatever is ſaid by a prince or a peer, carries with it great degree of perſuaſion from the rank of the perſon only. The ſame perſuaſion is generally attendant upon riches, *Et bene nummatum decorat ſuadela.* I lately heard a young gentleman relate an unlikely piece of news, in a company where it was received with ſome heſitation; upon which, he affirmed with great earneſtneſs, that it was certainly true, for he had heard it from a man of 4000*l.* a year. Handſome women have the ſame privilege of perſuading without argument, and by the like means; for, as their poet ſays,

Whatever they approve is ſweet,
And all is ſenſe that they repeat.

Fine

Of the argumentative eloquence we have examples in the works of ISOCRATES, LUCIAN, and other orators; who have had queſtions in philoſophy, law, ſpeculative politics, or philology for their topics. Of the mixed kind we find numberleſs examples in the hiſtorians, and in the orations of thoſe who have engaged in pleading cauſes, or in the practice of war, divinity, or politics. Amongſt the moſt famous in that way are DEMOSTHENES and CICERO; of whom, DEMOSTHENES apply'd himſelf chiefly, if not altogether, to the underſtanding of his auditors; even in thoſe orations, his *Philippics*, where he meant to animate and rouſe them SECT. II.

Fine cloaths, a decent gown and band, a diamond ring, are all inſtruments of great energy in promoting this ſort of conviction. Nay, there are aſſemblies, tho' I believe, only of the fanatical ſort, where the reverſe of all thoſe; to wit, the orator's bad language, aukward delivery, poverty, mean condition, and unfaſhionable apparel, will give him great credit in the *eyes* of his *hearers*, and produce conviction out of falſhood and abſurdity. So that this perſuaſion, when it is produced, is not ſo much a proof of the power of eloquence, as of the weakneſs of underſtanding in the generality of men; who have ſeldom any opinions, but what are obtruded upon them by authority.

PART them to action; whilſt CICERO, adapting
I. himſelf to the times in which he lived, often throws in a greater ſhare of the pathetic than would have ſucceeded with a people in whom the reaſoning faculty was more cultivated. This is the cauſe, as the Eſſay writer obſerves, *that ſevere and able judges have pre-fer'd* DEMOSTHENES *to* CICERO; *for, as the imagination and paſſions are then moſt refined and juſt, when they bear to the ſame point with reaſon; ſo that ſpecies of eloquence is the nobleſt, which tends to conduct them thither* *.

In my next ſection I ſhall endeavour to ſhow, in what manner Ridicule becomes a branch of this *nobleſt ſpecies of eloquence*; and cannot conceive, upon what grounds my Lord SHAFTSBURY's antagoniſt gave it a place amongſt the pathetic, or thoſe which act by an application to the paſſions. He ſays it excites

* It is remarkable, that the words uſed to expreſs the eloquence of Greece and Rome, convey a juſt idea of their ſeveral characters. In Greek, a piece of eloquence, let the ſubject be what it will, is called *logos*, a *diſcourſe*; and the perſon who delivers it, *rhetor*, or *ſpeaker*; whereas, in Latin, the performance is called *oratio*, from *orare* to entreat, plead, or beg; and the performer is called *orator*, an entreater, pleader, or beggar.

excites the paſſion of contempt. Allowing him that contempt and laughter (the latter of which Ridicule never fails to excite) are both of them paſſions; a very little reflection will convince us, that Ridicule is not therefore to be ranked amongſt the pathetic kinds of eloquence; becauſe, in pathetic eloquence, the paſſions are the inſtruments, upon which the artiſt plays, in order to produce that perſuaſion he aims at: whereas, contempt and laughter, call them what you will, are, in matters of enquiry, the conſequences of the detection of that ſort of falſhood, which we call the ridiculous; and are not the means, but the end †.

SECT. II.

† Some people may imagine, becauſe pathetic is derived from *pathos* paſſion, that therefore every thing, wherein paſſion is concerned, either as cauſe, means or conſequence, muſt be pathetic. At this rate a ſlap in the face would be pathetic; if either he who received, or he who gave it happened to be in a paſſion. But this is truſting too much to the infallibility of ſyllables.

SECT.

SECTION III.

PART I.

WHEN a general marches his army into the enemy's country, he never thinks it conſiſtent with prudence to leave any fortified place behind him untaken, unleſs the garriſon is very contemptible. In like manner, he who ſtrives upon paper to extend the dominions of truth, ſhould take care to obviate all the objections that have been offered againſt the cauſe he undertakes, however groundleſs they may appear to him, while they are ſo plauſible as to have the countenance of ſome men of ſenſe. It is for this reaſon, that a ſection of this ſhort work has been wholly employed in adjuſting certain differences betwixt eloquence and argument, ſuggeſted by the author of the eſſays; a taſk, which would not otherwiſe have been neceſſary: ſince whatever is employed in the ſearch of truth, whether it be addreſſed to men's knowledge or their prejudices, whether it tends to conduct or miſlead, muſt ever be addreſſed to the underſtanding; and, if eloquence, of

that

that ſort of eloquence which conſiſts of argument alone. SECT. III.

Having thus ſatisfied myſelf, and perhaps ſome of my readers, of one important truth, *that argumentative Ridicule is argumentative*, and conſequently one of the methods of reaſoning: I will venture a ſtep farther, and aſſert, that it is one of the methods the beſt founded, the eaſieſt comprehended, and the leaſt ſubject to fallacy; for it will always be found, AN APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE *by ſome familiar image or alluſion, which convinces by the juſtneſs, while it pleaſes by the novelty and contraſt of its application.*

It is in this laſt quality, *novelty*, that diſtinguiſhes it from what is commonly called ſerious reaſoning; and it is the firſt, *juſtneſs*, that diſtinguiſhes it from buffoonery or falſe Ridicule: for *falſe Ridicule is an appeal to falſe facts, or to true facts not parallel or applicable to the point in queſtion.* Its name of Ridicule it receives only from a conſequence, that never fails to attend it; for a ſerious falſhood is never confuted by a ſudden alluſion to a trivial or domeſtic fact,

PART I. without raiſing a ſmile or laugh in the hearers.

Thoſe who are not willing to receive theſe properties of Ridicule upon my bare aſſertion, muſt look for the proof of them in the works of thoſe authors, who have been moſt famous for their excellency in that way of writing. There it was that theſe aſſertions were formed, and thither I refer my reader; not imagining that he would reſt the cauſe upon any inſtances, which I might partially chuſe in its ſupport. However, by way of illuſtration at leaſt, I will give one inſtance of true, and another of falſe Ridicule; which I have choſen out of a great number, becauſe they both belong to one tranſaction, and that of a nature very public and intereſting.

When that famous bill, in the year 1733, called the Exciſe Scheme, was upon the point of being carried in the Houſe of Commons, a number of the moſt ſubſtantial merchants of the city of London, agreed to ſign a petition againſt it; and, that it might come with what they called greater weight, they proceeded in a long

train

train of coaches and chariots to preſent it themſelves in a body. This petition, and the formidable cavalcade that attended it, were no ſooner made known to the houſe than the chief-miniſter ſtood up and ſpoke againſt the manner of preſenting it with great eloquence and ſpirit; ſaying, amongſt other things, That, altho' thoſe gentlemen were contented in their writing with the title of humble petitioners, their appearance in Palace-Yard gave them more the air of another ſort of petitioners, commonly known by the name of *Sturdy Beggars*. An image that gives a juſter idea of the illegallity and impropriety of their proceeding, than a regular oration of half an hour could have effected. For what ought to give weight to a petition in an affair of that importance to the nation, but the matter and reaſons of the petition itſelf? And what could be more juſt than to call thoſe *Sturdy Beggars*, who, under pretence of petitioning, meant to extort what they wanted, by intimidating the members of parliament, and bullying the legiſlature?

SECT. III.

How then was this to be anſwered? It is, I muſt own, a puzzling queſtion. And

PART I. yet an anſwer, of ſome ſort or other, was abſolutely neceſſary, to prevent the party from being delivered over to eternal laughter and confuſion of face. For, as POPE ſays,

To vice and folly to confine the jeſt,
Sets half the world, God knows, againſt the reſt;
Did not the ſneer of more impartial men
At ſenſe and virtue ballance all again:
Judicious wits ſpread wide the ridicule,
And charitably comfort knave and fool.

With this humane deſign, one of the ringleaders of the patriots, for the time being, roſe up; and, without taking notice of the intention of the miniſter's ſpeech, which was expreſſed in a manner not at all ambiguous, laid hold, with great ſeeming heat, of the word *Beggar*; wondring to hear any man call thoſe *Beggars*, who were the pillars of the national commerce, and who had perſonally ſo great a ſhare of the national property; enlarging much upon their riches, which had never been brought into queſtion; and finiſhing the haranguc with a hiſtory of the miſchiefs that befel the government of Flanders, by a governor contemptuouſly

contemptuouſly beſtowing the appellation of *Gueux* upon the citizens of Ghent. See all on a ſudden the tables turned. For this reaſoning, ſuch as it was, favoured the deſigns of the party, and the then reigning prejudices of the vulgar; and, in conſequence of it, a ballad was compoſed, beginning SECT. III.

Of all the trades of London
A beggar's trade's the beſt,
Since BOB *allows us that trade*
Who ruins all the reſt;
And a begging we muſt go.

Which acknowledged the merchants to be *beggars*, and put their beggary in a multitude of new and diverting lights, not very honourable for the man who had obtained, for many years, the ſole adminiſtration of public affairs; and who had ſo inſolently, as was ſuppoſed, upbraided them with that miſery, of which he muſt have been the principal cauſe.

This, in a week's time, was ſpread over the moſt diſtant parts of the iſland, and raiſed an enthuſiaſtic rage in the populace,

PART I. that might have been attended with the moſt cruel conſequences, if any accident had put it in motion. For, as true Ridicule is one of the moſt forcible and expeditious of all the methods of reaſoning; ſo falſe Ridicule, whenever it can be brought to take effect, as it is the quickeſt, is the moſt to be dreaded of all the methods of ſophiſtry.

Had the chief miniſter really called the merchants of London *Beggars*, he would have furniſhed evidence, from his own mouth, for putting his adminiſtration in the moſt contemptible light; and the *ballad* would have been true Ridicule: but, as that pretended fact was known, to the ſober and well informed to be falſe, the performance could not to any ſuch appear otherwiſe, than as a ſophiſtical piece of buffoonery.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

IT will probably be objected to Ridicule, that, even as it has been defcrib'd and examplify'd in the foregoing Section, it is capable of ferving the purpofe of fcreening impofture, as well as of expofing it; and therefore a very ambiguous and inſufficient *criterion* of truth. This objection is not without foundation. But if we nicely examine the ſeveral inſtances of falſe Ridicule from whence it ariſes, the objection will be found not owing to any imperfection in the nature of Ridicule, but to the weakneſs and prejudice of thoſe for whoſe conviction it is intended. He who ſhould find out a method, by the immediate application of which fools and prejudiced perſons might be enabled to diſtinguiſh truth from falſhood, would find a philoſopher's ſtone indeed. But there is no likelihood that ſuch a *ſuccedaneum* for good ſenſe will ever be found, or that it was ever intended by the Almighty, who is equally the father of the wiſe and of the filly; and who has, no doubt, ordained all thoſe diverſities, which exiſt in nature, for the

SECT. IV.

PART I. happineſs of the whole. It is he who has given, according to the poet,

Fear to the ſtateſman, raſhneſs to the chief,
To kings preſumption, and to crouds belief.

Mundus vult decipi: and I write not for the many, whom it would be perhaps as unfit, as it is impoſſible to undeceive. What ſpecies of reaſoning is there, the moſt ſerious and formal, that has not been made the channel for conveying error and abſurdity to the underſtanding, under the appearance of truth? And when we ſay, that this ſort of reaſoning is leaſt liable to be abuſed, it is ſaying as much for it, as can be ſaid for moſt things, in which the frail race of man is concern'd. Falſe reaſoning, by the abuſe of words, is very eaſy and common, becauſe the ideas attached to general terms are very various, indiſtinct, and eaſily confounded; but the properties of things, eſpecially thoſe of a vulgar and domeſtic nature, in which the force and pleaſure of Ridicule chiefly conſiſts, cannot ſafely be ſummon'd for evidence to ſupport any principle or general aſſertion, unleſs that principle be true, and conſiſtent with the exiſtence of things.

But

But, however excellent this ſpecific may be, I will allow that, like other excellent remedies, it may become poiſon in the hands of a quack; and that it is of conſequence to have an antidote always ready upon occaſion. This we need not be long in ſearch of, ſince there is one handed down to us in the works of a very ancient and eminent phyſician, and which I am able to recommend upon my own repeated experience, altho it has been diſcountenanced of late by ſeveral apothecaries; either becauſe they did not underſtand the *recipe*, or becauſe they had not thoſe drugs in their ſhops, that were neceſſary for the compoſition. SECT. IV.

To leave parables, and to explain myſelf like a man of this world, this *recipe* is no other than that rule of GORGIAS, quoted by ARISTOTLE, which the critic upon the *Characteriſticks* has re-tranſlated and new-applyed after my Lord SHAFTSBURY, and which I ſhall take the like freedom of tranſlating again, and new-applying after him; always however obſerving that good manners and deference, which is due to a living author.

The

PART I. The paſſage in ARISTOTLE tranſlated verbatim, runs thus, *But with regard to thoſe things that excite laughter, ſince they ſeem to have their uſe in debate, we ought,* ſays GORGIAS, *to diſcuſs the adverſary's ſerious argument by Ridicule, and his Ridicule by ſerious argument; rightly ſpeaking* *.

But, having expounded this paſſage with ſufficient accuracy, as far as regards the relation

* The original words are, ΠΕΡΙ ΔΕ ΤΩΝ ΓΕΛΟΙΩΝ, ΕΠΕΙΔΗ ΤΙΝΑ ΔΟΚΕΙ ΧΡΗΣΙΝ ΕΧΕΙΝ ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΓΩΣΙ, ΚΑΙ ΔΕΙΝ, ΕΦΗ ΓΟΡΓΙΑΣ, ΤΗΝ ΜΕΝ ΣΠΟΥΔΗΝ· ΔΙΑΦΘΕΙΡΕΙΝ ΤΩΝ ΕΝΑΝΤΙΩΝ, ΓΕΛΩΤΙ· ΤΟΝ ΔΕ ΓΕΛΩΤΑ, ΣΠΟΥΔΗ. ΟΡΘΩΣ ΛΕΓΩΝ. Rhet. lib. iii. cap. 18. And they are thus tranſlated by the author of the *Eſſays*. *As Ridicule ſeems to be of ſome uſe in pleading, it was the opinion of* GORGIAS *that you ought to confound your adverſary's ſerious argument by raillery, and his raillery by ſerious argument. And he judged well.* It were to be wiſhed that the tranſlator had inform'd us by what authority he has render'd the word ΔΙΑΦΘΕΙΡΕΙΝ *to confound*, in a diametrical oppoſition to all the hitherto known meanings of it. For what can be more oppoſite than *to confound* and *to ſeparate*? ΔΙΑΦΘΕΙΡΕΙΝ in its moſt ſimple ſenſe, means *to ſeparate thoroughly*, and in all the uſual applications

lation betwixt Engliſh and Greek words, my work will be but half done, unleſs I tranſlate thoſe words again into their preciſe meaning, and ſhew what relation they have to realities. SECT. IV.

All men, who engage in any controverſy with the candid intention of diſcovering truth, cannot fail of obſerving, how much their laudable endeavours are obſtructed by the imperfection and abuſe of language. I believe we may venture to ſay, that this is the very ſoul of controverſy, and that thinking men could not diſagree in their opinions concerning any thing that comes within the reach of human reaſon, if it were poſſible to find a number of ſigns, that ſhould, with exactneſs, convey the ſame ideas from one perſon to another. Common language is far from being equal to this purpoſe; and the only remedy for the defect is, by definitions and examples to explain the principal terms that are to be employed; and then

plications very little deviates from this its original meaning. Such are to *demoliſh*, *conſume*, *corrupt*, *diſcuſs*. Of theſe I have made uſe of the laſt, as it has the additional authority and ſupport of all the Latin tranſlators of this paſſage, that have fallen into my hands.

it

PART I.

it ſignifies little, what theſe terms are; whether they are ſuch as have been already uſed, or others arbitrarily deviſed for the occaſion.

The term *Ridicule* has been already defin'd and examplify'd; ſo that there can be no difficulty, at leaſt with regard to my idea of it; but the term *ſerious argument* bears ſo many different meanings, that to uſe it without the like caution would be to involve us in a labyrinth of confuſion. However, before I pretend to define its proper meaning in the above ſentence in ARISTOTLE, I will firſt point out, in a few lines, how this definition comes to be neceſſary; and the rather, as the enquiry is not barely verbal, but will likewiſe throw ſome light upon the main ſubject.

There is, and no doubt always has been, in all places, in ancient Athens, as well as in modern London, a great number of ſhallow-pated people, who ſeeing the tribute of applauſe, and kind reception, that never fails to be paid to true wit and humour, are willing to have likewiſe their ſhare of it; but, not being bleſt with the lawful means, *viz.*

viz. a lively fancy, and a ſound judgment, employ ſuch means as nature has beſtowed upon them. Some of theſe facetious gentlemen will lay joint-ſtools in the way of their companions, pin their ſkirts to the table-cloth, archly ſlip away their chairs from under them, and abundance of other conceits, from whence nothing but a monkey could claim any merit. But thoſe ſhin-breaking, clothes-daubing, chair-withdrawing wits, are each of them a CERVANTES or a CHESTERFIELD, in compariſon of another ſort of idiotical vermin, who to be thought witty, will deceive you by a direct lie; or keep you a conſiderable time in ſuſpenſe by an ambiguity; and then laugh, and tell you *it was a joke*. The conſequences of this pitiful practice are deplorable; for, by its frequency, not only the language is corrupted by the miſapplication of words; but that innocence, confidence, and ſecurity, which conſtitute the great pleaſure and dignity of converſation, amongſt thoſe of liberal minds, is often hurt and confounded. How often do we hear even men of tolerable breeding, aſk one another, *Are you in jeſt or ſerious?* that is, *Do you lie or ſpeak truth?* and yet by the common-

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neſs

PART I. neſs of this ſort of jeſting not incurr the reſentment, that would follow the queſtion properly expreſſed.

We ſee therefore, that by *ſerious* is often meant *ſincere* and *in earneſt*; and by jeſting, their oppoſites, *lying* and *trifling*; but in this treatiſe we allow no ſuch meaning to them; and I truſt that in this we walk hand in hand with ARISTOTLE. Ridicule, or true jeſting, is, with regard to ſincerity, as much ſerious, as any other method of reaſoning; and the more apt to promote both its deſired conſequences of conviction and laughter, the more the ſentiment of the diſpenſer is ſincere, and his deportment grave. What then is it which diſtinguiſhes, what we call *ſerious argument* from *Ridicule?* That will be eaſily found, if the reader will give himſelf the trouble of turning back to that place, where I account for the name of *Ridicule*; he will there find, that it is ſo called *from its exciting laughter in the hearers*; ſo, in like manner, the other ſorts of reaſoning are called *ſerious*, from their *not exciting laughter*, without any regard to their being ſincere or otherwiſe.

Having

Having thus fully explained my terms, I will proceed to illuſtrate the rule of GORGIAS, by ſhewing *that a jeſt, that will not bear a ſerious examination, is certainly falſe wit*; and likewiſe, however *hardy* it may appear to the critic upon Lord SHAFTSBURY, *that an argument, that will not bear Ridicule, is certainly falſe logic.* In other words, *that gravity is the proper teſt of Ridicule, and Ridicule the proper teſt of gravity*; even as the rule of addition is the teſt of ſubtraction, and ſubtraction of addition. I hope that gentleman will not call this likewiſe, *a ſee-ſaw ſort of proof*, and ſay, it is *trying the juſtneſs of the ſquare by the work that is formed by it* *. SECT. IV.

But one ſhort ſtory will clear up this matter better than a volume of dry terms; and one now occurs to my memory, which, I believe, I have formerly met with in the Cambridge jeſts, or ſome other valuable repoſitory of that kind.

* *Eſſay on the Characteriſticks*, Sect. IX.

As

PART I.

As an Oxford ſcholar was ſitting at ſupper, in the Chriſtmaſs vacation, with his father and mother, plain ſenſible country-people, the diſcourſe fell, as is natural, upon the univerſity; and led the youth inſenſibly into a declamation in praiſe of learning in general, and particularly of logic. I ſhould be glad to know, ſays the father, what this ſame logic is, you are ſo mightily fond of. It is, ſays the ſcholar, the art of making people believe whatever we pleaſe. Ay, ſays the old man, that's curious indeed. Prithee, Tom, give your mother and me a ſhort flouriſh of it, that we may have ſome reaſon to admire as well as you. Juſt as he ſpoke, a couple of minc'd pyes being ſet upon the table; I will prove, ſays the ſcholar, that here are three pyes. That will oblige us extremely, ſays the old folks. Nothing more eaſy, ſays the ſon. You will grant me, that this is one. Yes. And that this is two. No doubt. Why then, ſays this young Plato, if you put one and two together, they make three. O wonderful! cries the farmer. Then, my dear, continues he, addreſſing himſelf to his wife, you

shall take one pye, I another, and Tom shall have the third, to encourage him in the purſuit of ſuch excellent ſtudies. SECT. IV.

Here is an example of *ſerious argument* without truth in itſelf, or ſincerity in the perſon by whom it is uſed; and here is *Ridicule* to demoliſh it, which is true, and in earneſt. If any one objects to my example, that what I call *ſerious* argument is in reality ridiculous and ſilly; it is fit, that I inform ſuch an objector, once for all, that it is only ſuch ſerious argument, that Ridicule pretends to deſtroy; and that it is only ſuch ſerious argument, that ſhuns and diſclaims the teſt of Ridicule. Had our ſcholar contented himſelf with proving, that two pyes and one made three, he might have ſet all the Ridicule of RABELAIS at defiance. So much for logic, now for Ridicule.

This diverting manner of reaſoning, altho the leaſt fitted, as has been before obſerved, to convince people of what is contrary to the nature of things; has been nevertheleſs ſometimes employed for that purpoſe, and perhaps not without ſome ſucceſs,

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upon minds weak and prejudiced: and being of a rapid and collective nature, it is neceſſary to ſtop its progreſs by ſome method of reaſoning more ſlow and analytical; which may, like FABIUS againſt HANNIBAL, *cunctando reſtituere rem.*

Dr. SWIFT, whoſe works afford many examples of *true Ridicule*, now and then gives us an inſtance of the *falſe*, chiefly, if not altogether, owing to the force of party-ſpirit; which never fails to incline thoſe, who are under its influence, to a perverſion of truth, let their good ſenſe and natural love of truth be ever ſo great. It was this ſpirit which prompted that ingenious writer, born with a diſpoſition the moſt remote from ſlaviſh, to endeavour to ridicule the whig principle of *the right in the people of reſiſting tyrants*; a principle which is in reality the ſentiment of human nature, and which by an appeal to numberleſs facts throws the Ridicule with irreſiſtible force upon its oppoſers. What then could thoſe expect, who were ſo raſh as to engage common ſenſe at her own weapons, but to leave a ſad example of the inſufficiency of human wit, when improperly and unworthily applied?

This

This waggery has for title, *Mrs.* BULL's *vindication of the indefeaſible right of Cuckoldom incumbent upon wives, in caſe of the tyranny, infidelity, or inſufficiency of their huſband's; being a full anſwer to the Doctor's ſermon againſt Adultery.* And it is introduced into that excellent piece of allegorical humour, *The Hiſtory of John Bull*, of which it makes a part; as a wen makes a part of the fair body that is diſgraced by it. SECT. IV.

To detect the fallacy of this pretended piece of Ridicule, let us follow the advice of ARISTOTLE, and reduce it to the formality of a ſyllogiſm or two. As thus: Firſt, the author ironically informs you, that

A wife is to her huſband, what a nation is to its king:
Now, it being lawful for a nation to ſhake off its king whenever it is diſpleaſed with him, and to take another in his room:
Ergo, it is lawful for a wife to renounce her huſband, whenever he incurs her diſpleaſure, and to confer her favours upon any one ſhe likes better.

PART I. To make this ironical ſyllogiſm ſerve the purpoſe of the party, the faithful reader is charitably ſuppoſed to reſolve it into the following; which he will not fail to do, *coute qui'l coute*, if he be a true ſon of SACHEVEREL.

It is contrary to all order and the common ſenſe of mankind, that a wife ſhould, upon any occaſion, think herſelf authoriſed to abjure her fidelity to her huſband.

And a nation being exactly to its king, what a wife is to her huſband:

Ergo, it is contrary to common ſenſe to believe, that any failure in a king can ever abſolve his ſubjects from their allegiance. *Quod erat demonſtrandum.*

It requires very little ſcrutiny to diſcover, wherein the fallacy lies of this reaſoning; for it appears, at the firſt glance, that the whole is founded upon a ſuppoſition, that a king ſtands in the ſame relation to the people he governs, that a huſband does to his wife: which is ſo manifeſtly otherwiſe, that it were an abuſe of paper to ſhew in how many points the difference conſiſts.

Beſides,

Beſides, the author, for the ſake of this abſurd buffoonery, has deſtroyed that allegorical conſiſtency which is ſo divertingly preſerved throughout the reſt of the performance. And whereas Mr. *Bull*, in the body of the work, repreſents the Engliſh nation, and Mrs. *Bull* the parliament; in this excreſcence Mr. *Bull* is forced to repreſent the king of England, and Mrs. *Bull* the nation. An algebraiſt, who, in the progreſs of his calculation, makes the letter *b* ſometimes ſtand for one number and ſometimes for another, has no chance of producing a ſolution, that will do him credit. And, for my own part, if I may be admitted an evidence, as well as counſel, in this caſe, I declare, that I never found, in reading theſe two chapters of SWIFT, any more inclination to laugh, than to be convinced; and therefore doubt not, but the verdict will be brought in, *Falſe Ridicule*, and conſequently no teſt of truth. SECT. IV.

AN ESSAY

SECTION V.

PART I. IT is not enough, that a position is false; to make it ridiculous, and a proper object for Ridicule, it must likewise be IMPORTANT. When HORACE says, *Parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus mus*, he does not mean, that the mouse was ridiculous in itself; but that it only became so by the mighty expectations, which this pompous and important delivery had occasioned. And although *importance* or *gravity* is not, as Lord SHAFTSBURY asserts, *the essence of imposture*; it is so far the *essence* of the *ridiculous*, that it is easy to produce a multitude of instances, where Ridicule has justly fallen upon sayings, that were not otherwise false, than as they were not adequate, nor of a piece, with the solemnity of the design.

One of these examples is recorded of DIOGENES the Cynic, which I shall relate at length, for the benefit of such of my readers, as may not be particularly read in the history of those *wags*, whom the ancients called

called *philoſophers*; and who, in reality, deſerved that honoured name much better, than ſome of their more ſerious brethren, for reaſons already hinted. SECT. V.

PLATO having defined a man *A two-legg'd animal without feathers*, in the hearing of DIOGENES, the deſcription appeared to him extremely ridiculous, and he reſolved to expoſe it to the laughter of the public. To do this effectually, he caſt about in ſearch of ſome contemptible animal, that might anſwer the deſcription; but could find none. Convinced at laſt, that he could not attack his rival on the ſide of *falſhood*, he gave over that ſearch; but, as he ſtill lay open on the ſide of *inſignificance*, by a definition ſo unbecoming the real dignity of the ſubject, the ſuppoſed dignity of the philoſopher, and the ſcientific pomp of words in which it was dreſſed; he reſolved to make that example, which he ſtrove in vain to find ready made. So having ſtript a cock of its feathers, he hid it under his cloak, and ſetting it ſuddenly upon its legs, before PLATO and his admirers,

PARTE mirers, he cryed out, *Behold the man of* PLATO!

This was thought a witty thing, at the time, and has been handed down as ſuch through many generations. It was certainly true Ridicule, as to *importance*; and yet the thing ridiculed was not ſhewn to be otherwiſe falſe, but the contrary; as the ridiculer was obliged to appeal, not to the nature of things, but to what was manifeſtly artificial.

But, to make Ridicule compleatly triumphant, it is neceſſary, that it ſhould be employed upon what is compleatly ridiculous; that is, what is both *falſe* and *important*. It is for this reaſon, that of all the different abſurdities, which have diſgraced the human ſpecies, there is none, that has been the cauſe of ſo much true wit and Ridicule, as *falſe religion*. And indeed how is it poſſible for thoſe, on whom the Almighty has beſtowed faculties of mind ſuperior to others, to employ them more properly than in vindicating his honour; and endeavouring to communicate their own juſt ſentiments in a familiar

familiar way to thoſe of their fellow crea- SECT. tures, who are leſs happily endowed? V.

How neceſſary a taſk this has been, let all hiſtory teſtify. For, from the moſt early times, there never has been wanting a ſet of impoſtors, who made it their buſineſs to practiſe upon the fear, ignorance, and credulity of the weaker and more numerous part of mankind, by repreſenting the Eternal Being not ſuch as he appears in his glorious works, but ſuch as beſt ſuited their baſe purpoſes. And yet *in no time was God without witneſs*, as St. PAUL expreſſes it; as there have been found in every age ſome men of ſuperior ſenſe and honeſty, who have endeavoured, and often with ſucceſs, to withdraw their weak brethren from that impious yoke, by expoſing to laughter thoſe lies and abſurdities, which had been impoſed upon them inſtead of fact and argument.

LUCIAN, one of the moſt correct writers amongſt the ancients, and the greateſt maſter of that ſort of analogical reaſoning, which we call Ridicule, has employed his wit,

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wit, with great ſucceſs, againſt the fooliſh worſhip and abominable notions of the Deity, as by law and cuſtom eſtabliſhed in his days. And, before him many others, particularly the Latin Satiriſts, JUVENAL, PERSIUS, and HORACE, thought it their duty to turn thoſe ſerious matters into merriment. To eke out this ſhort treatiſe, in the German faſhion, with thread-bare ſcraps of Latin, and by quoting from authors, that are intimately known to all thoſe, who underſtand the language in which they are written, would be tireſome and impertinent. I will therefore exemplify this part of my ſubject by a piece of Ridicule, much more excellent, as well as more ancient, than any that is to be found in the authors above mentioned, which is preſerved in the latter part of the 13th chapter of *The wiſdom of* SOLOMON. I ſhall inſert the whole of it, that I may be ſure of indemnifying my reader for his trouble, by preſenting him with a piece of moſt compleat *eloquence*, which might not otherwiſe have fallen into his hands.

1. *Surely*

1. *Surely vain are all men by nature, who* SECT. *are ignorant of* GOD, *and could not out of the* V. *good things that are seen, know him that is; neither by considering the works, did they acknowledge the work-master;*

2. *But deemed either fire, or wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the violent water, or the lights of Heaven to be the Gods which govern the world.*

3. *With whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be Gods; let them know how much better the Lord of them is: for the first author of beauty hath created them.*

4. *But if they were astonished at their power and virtue, let them understand by them, how much mightier he is that made them.*

5. *For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures, proportionably the maker of them is seen.*

6. *But*

PART I.

6. *But yet for this they are the leſs to be blamed: for they, peradventure, err ſeeking* GOD *and deſirous to find him.*

7. *For, being converſant in his works, they ſearch him diligently and believe their ſight: becauſe the things are beautiful that are ſeen.*

8. *Howbeit neither are they to be pardoned.*

9. *For if they were able to know ſo much, that they could aim at the world, how did they not ſooner find out the* LORD *thereof?*

10. *But miſerable are they, and in dead things is their hope, who called them gods which are the work of mens hands, gold and ſilver to ſhew art in, and reſemblances of beaſts, or a ſtone good for nothing, the work of an ancient hand.*

11. *Now a carpenter that felleth timber, after he hath ſawn down a tree meet for the purpoſe, and taken off all the bark ſkilfully round*

round about, and hath wrought it handſomely, and made a veſſel thereof fit for the ſervice of man's life *.

SECT. V.

12. *And, after ſpending the refuſe of his work to dreſs his meat, hath filled himſelf;*

13. *And taking the very refuſe among thoſe which ſerved to no uſe, (being a crooked piece of wood and full of knots) hath carved it diligently when he had nothing elſe to do, and formed it by the ſkill of his underſtanding, and faſhioned it to the image of a man;*

14. *Or made it like ſome vile beaſt, laying it over with vermilion, and with paint*

* The kindred, which, in a carver's ſhop, a bench or ſtool may claim to a god, is no leſs obvious to the ſenſible few, than it is comical. We find it accordingly introduced by HORACE, who ſtrikes at the whole *pandæmonium* of heathen idolatry, through the ſides of their brother PRIAPUS,

Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum:
Cum faber incertus ſcamnum faceretne Priapum,
Maluit eſſe Deum. L. 1. Sat. 8.

PART I. *colouring it red, and covering every ſpot there-in.*

15. *And when he had made a convenient room for it, ſet it in a wall, and made it faſt with iron:*

16. *For he provided for it that it might not fall, knowing that it was unable to help itſelf, (for it is an image and hath need of help.)*

17. *Then maketh he prayer for his goods, for his wife and children, and is not aſhamed to ſpeak to that which hath no life.*

18. *For health, he calleth upon that which is weak: for life, prayeth to that which is dead: for aid, humbly beſeecheth that which hath leaſt means to help: and, for a good journey, he aſketh of that which cannot ſet a foot forward:*

19. *And for gaining and getting, and for good ſucceſs of his hands, aſketh ability to do, of him that is moſt unable to do any thing.*

Here

Here is truly *ſerious reaſoning*, that tends by inveſtigation to the knowledge of the Divine Being, as far as human faculties are capable to go, and which MOMUS himſelf would not be able to ridicule; and here is *Ridicule* to expoſe the abſurdity of the popular notions and practices, that will ſtand the examination of ARISTOTLE with all his dialectics. SECT. V.

The Critic upon Lord SHAFTSBURY appears however to be a great enemy to this familiar way of trying religious opinions; and finiſhes the 7th ſection of his *Eſſay* with what he ſeems to think very much to its diſadvantage, and the diſadvantage of Ridicule in general, in theſe words: *It ſeems therefore, that his Lordſhip's obſervation (which contains the quinteſſence of his aſſociate's work, and which probably was the leaven, that leavened the whole lump of malice and dulneſs) inſtead of being favourable to Ridicule, as a teſt of truth, can only tend to diſgrace it. For ſince every religious and unbelieving ſect have alike* SUCCESSFULLY EMPLOYED IT IN SUPPORTING *their reſpective tenets, and in rendering thoſe of their adverſaries contemptible; it follows, inaſmuch as doctrines, which are eſſentially*

PART I. *essentially repugnant, cannot all be true; that Ridicule is one of the most powerful engines, by which error can be maintained and established* †.

This is strong, pointed, and seems to conclude the argument as thoroughly as it concludes the section. What a pity it is, that it should have no better foundation than what the author himself owns to be in the former sentence, *a leavened lump of malice and dulness.*

† The observation of Lord SHAFTSBURY here alluded to, is to be found in his foregoing leaf, when speaking of modern zealots, he tells us, that *Whatever they think grave and solemn, they suppose must never be treated out of a grave and solemn way; though what another thinks so, they can be contented to treat otherwise, and are fond to try the test of Ridicule against any opinion besides their own.* But how the remarker should find in these words any thing concerning the *support* of different opinions, by the means of Ridicule, it is difficult to guess. He likewise accuses Mr. COLLINS, whom he calls *his associate*, of this gross absurdity; and perhaps he may be guilty of it. But as he has not quoted any passage, or so much as mentioned the name of the work where it is to be found; we have reason to doubt, whether he has not mistaken Mr. COLLINS, as much as he has my Lord SHAFTSBURY. But supposing Lord SHAFTSBURY and his associates to be as dull and malicious, as he has been pleased to represent them, what is it to the merits of Ridicule?

It

It is certainly true, that many religious sects have successfully employed Ridicule, in *rendering the tenets of their adversaries contemptible*; but how is it possible that an instrument, whose professed use is to pull down, should be employed in *supporting* any sect of religion, except there were only two sects of religion in the world, and one of them necessarily true; whereas it is possible there may be five hundred, and all, but one, false and ridiculous. Was there ever any author so weak as to fancy, that where two men of war are pelting one another, either of them proposes to mend his own rigging by the shot, which he pours into his adversary? Is the worship of VENUS or GANYMEDE at all more established by the excellent jokes, which JUVENAL has thrown at the crocodile and onion gods of the Egyptians? Or suppose a Catholic should raise the laugh ever so properly against the worship of FUM HO, and the Chinese should return it full upon St. ANTHONY of Padua; would any one be more convinced of the truth of the Chinese or Popish idolatry, than he was before? Did PASCAL's admired Ridicule of the Jesuits prove any thing towards the truth of Jansenism?

SECT. V.

PART I.

nism? No. After all his wit, their doctrines of the *grace of congruity*, and *grace of efficacy*, continue to be equally unintelligible, and equally as useleſs as ever: and both ſides were expoſed to the Ridicule of more unpaſſionate minds; by whoſe means, as VOLTAIRE obſerves, France was eaſed of a diſpute that equally diſgraced chriſtianity, learning, and the human underſtanding*.

Indeed when two ſects, in the ſame country, while they appear to be contending for the truth of their ſeveral opinions, are in reality contending for power and riches; that ſect, which deſtroys its adverſary by any means, direct or ſiniſter, by ſerioufneſs, ridicule, or blows, eſtabliſhes itſelf as effectually as it deſires; and huzzas, like a victorious ſhip, that has ſunk its enemy; tho',

* *On ſe ſouvient, avec quel mepris le duc d' Orleans et ſon miniſtre parlaient des querelles qu'ils appaiſerent; quel ridicule ils jetterent ſur cette guerre de controverſe. Ce mepris et ce ridicule ne ſervirent pas peu a la paix. On ſe laſſe enfin de combattre, pour des querelles dont le monde rit.*

Siecle de Louis 14. *chap.* du Janſeniſme.

with

with twenty ſhots in its own hull, half its men ſlain, and not a maſt ſtanding. SECT. V.

It is much to the honour of the preſent ſtate of this country, that, notwithſtanding the univerſal toleration, the liberty of the preſs, and the ſecurity with which all opinions may be canvaſſed, there is little or nothing offered tending to ridicule the religion, that is either by law eſtabliſhed or tolerated. It has not been ſo always, and, I believe, it will be found, that the books and papers of Ridicule upon religious ſubjects, have been much more numerous at any time, between the reformation and the acceſſion of his preſent majeſty, than they have been during his happy reign. And the reaſon ſeems to be obvious. For, in former reigns, the factions which tore the bowels of the nation, were formed of certain religious ſects, who carried creeds for their banners, differing often in the meereſt trifles; which trifles however being the bond of union of each party, as well as the pretended cauſe of diviſion, were magnified into matters of the greateſt IMPORTANCE by their ſeveral leaders and trumpeters; ſo that

PART I. they became from contemptible excreſcences to be the whole, almoſt, of the religion of the times.

In this every way polemical ſtate of our unhappy country, when the ſpirit of controverſy deſcended ſo low, as to excite little miſſes of ten years old, to pull caps about *the divine right of epiſcopacy*, or *the validity of lay baptiſm*; when it roſe ſo high, as to make one of the greateſt epic poets that any age has furniſhed, introduce the Almighty diſcourſing like a ſchool-divine *, and the devils amuſing themſelves in hell with metaphyſical cunnundrums †; when the friends of peace and liberty were by turns terrified with the proſpect of anarchy, from the hair-brained enthuſiaſm of the ſectaries; and of popiſh tyranny, under a bigotted king. Then it was, that BUTLER, TINDAL, TRENCHARD, GORDON, and many others roſe up

* MILTON's *Paradiſe-Loſt*, Book III.

† *Others apart ſat on a hill retir'd*
In thoughts more elevate, and reaſon'd high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
Fixt fate, free will, foreknowledge abſolute;
And found no end, in wand'ring mazes loſt.
Book II.

to reap this fat harveſt, which the heats of the times had brought to maturity; then it was, that Dr. SWIFT wrote his *Tale of a Tub*, to aid the ſerious pen of Archbiſhop TILLOTSON and other learned and good men, whoſe manner of writing was not ſo calculated to produce the contempt which they aimed at, and which the ſafety and happineſs of our church and ſtate required *.

SECT. V.

But of late years the perſons, who have had the adminiſtration of public affairs, have found, that government can be maintained with more ſecurity by other means, than by making

* Lord ORRERY has ſummed up the excellency of *the Tale of the Tub* in the following words: *Throughout the whole piece there is a vein of Ridicule and good humour, that laughs pedantry and affectation into the loweſt degree of contempt; and expoſes the character of* JACK *and* PETER, *in ſuch a manner as never will be forgiven, and never can be anſwered.*

Remarks on Dr. SWIFT, Lett. xxiii.

It does however more than barely laugh at pedantry and affectation, which is properly the office of that ſort of Ridicule, whoſe object is manner and action; and of which I ſhall treat in the ſecond part of this eſſay. *The Tale of the Tub*, like *Don Quixote*, is of the argumentive kind of Ridicule, whoſe buſineſs is to oppoſe falſe opinions; and operates by raiſing up fictitious cha-

PART I.

making a ſtalking-horſe of religion; ſo that thoſe trifling diſtinctions, invented and kept up to enflame the populace on either ſide, loſing their intended effect, loſt by degrees their IMPORTANCE, and by ceaſing to be important, have ceaſed to be the objects of Ridicule. Religion is now become in England, almoſt † what it was at firſt intended to be; not a tool for the politic and the ſeditious to work withal, but a matter entirely of private racters to act in familiar occurrences in life, upon principles falſe and chimerical, and by repreſenting the obvious conſequences of ſuch a proceeding, convincing the reader of the falſhood and abſurdity of ſuch principles and opinions. This is called, in common language, with great propriety, *putting thoſe opinions to the proof*; and is, of all the modes of Ridicule that ever were found out, the faireſt as well as the moſt diverting.

† The word *almoſt*, although unmuſical in the ſentence, cannot, with a ſafe conſcience, be left out; becauſe we can never be ſaid to be *altogether* in that ſtate of liberty and common ſenſe, to which the conſtitution of this kingdom has been verging for this hundred years paſt, while there is any law in force to puniſh thoſe, who differ in opinion from their rulers in matters merely ſpeculative. Perhaps there are people, who will be ſurpriſed when they hear the word *puniſhment*, fancying that it has no other meaning than to burn, fine and imprifon. But their ſurpriſe will perhaps ceaſe, when

private concern, ſubject to no juriſdiction, SECT. V.
but that of conſcience or private opinion;
which will ever be moſt reſpectable when moſt
diveſted of worldly power and riches; and
will ever moſt deſerve the approbation of the
wiſe and virtuous, the leſs noiſe it makes.

when they are put in mind, that to declare a man incapable of holding any place of truſt or profit under the government, is often decreed in court as a puniſhment for very great offences: and, whilſt a law ſubſiſts to inflict ſuch a ſtigma upon uſeful ſubjects, who diſſent from the parliamentary creed, the toleration is far from being compleat.

SECT. VI.

PART I. BESIDES philoſophical truth, which is required in poſitions that are preſented immediately to the underſtanding, there is a thing called POETICAL TRUTH, which is required in thoſe images, which are preſented to the fancy, either to beautify or illuſtrate compoſitions in poetry, of which they may be called the eſſence. Theſe paſs commonly by the name of *allegories*, *metaphors* or *ſimilies*; and are always to be condemned as falſe, whenever they preſent any idea to the imagination that is abſurd, mean, or unſuitable.

To men of a lively and orderly fancy, to whom every word produces the idea, of which it is a ſign, with diſtinctneſs and preciſion, every incongruity of that ſort is immediately manifeſt; but, to thoſe who are not bleſt with this faculty, which is often called *taſte*, in ſo eminent a degree, ſome foreign help is neceſſary, in order to furniſh their judgment with more perfect materials to exerciſe itſelf upon. And, of all the methods ſuggeſted by

by critics for this purpoſe, there is none quicker or ſurer, than one recommend in the *Spectator*, N°. 595, and that is, to call in the aſſiſtance of the pencil, and try what effect ſuch metaphors or imagery would have, when exhibited upon canvaſs. This is nothing but that APPEAL FROM WORDS TO FACTS of which I have been hitherto treating; and which will be a conſtant detector of the falſe and ridiculous, whenever it obtrudes itſelf.

SECT. V.

Suppoſe, for inſtance, the friends of the church of England ſhould have a deſire to expoſe the wild and abſurd expreſſions, uſed by the growing ſect of Moravians in their public worſhip. In what manner is this moſt effectually to be done?

According to my Lord SHAFTSBURY's ſyſtem of Ridicule, PUNCH would be employed to ſing a hymn out of their *Salt-book* in broken Engliſh, accompanied with a thorough baſs upon the *Salt-box*, inſtead of an organ; and, to render it more ſavoury, to change the words here and there into others, for which his oratory is chiefly admired,

While

PART I.

While this was performing, the mob of Smithfield, and, perhaps, politer people would laugh; but it would be at PUNCH for his naſtineſs and monky-tricks, while the brethren would eſcape unhurt.

This is not Ridicule, but only burleſque and waggery. But if any man has a mind to raiſe an effectual laugh at theſe devout proceedings, let him open the book at page 53, and with a compoſed countenance, and a tone of voice fit for the leſſon of the day, read aloud:

Lovely ſide-hole take in me,
Let me ever be in thee;
O ſide-hole's wound, my heart and ſoul
Does pant for thy ſo lovely hole.
Lovely ſide-hole take in me,
Let me ever be in thee:
If I once ſecurely ſit,
In the lovely ſide-hole's ſplit,
O then I for ever dwell
In the lovely PLEURA'S *cell:*
O then I, &c.

OR;

OR,

SECT. VI.

Ye children, where do you dwell, where it is your ground,
Where is the beſt care for ſuch little ones found?
We dwell in the wound-holes, in JESU's *fleſh made,*
The holy church cares for, and lends us her aid.

But will for ſuch number of doves room be found,
In the narrow ſpace of the holy ſide's wound?
O yes, and beſides there is room for to ſit,
In all the holes of the lamb's hands and feet.

What is it that in all your meetings reſounds?
One ſpeaks, hears, and ſings here at all times of wounds;
One ſpeaks, hears, and ſings here at all times of wounds;
Wounds, wounds, again wound-holes, and nothing but wounds: &c. &c. &c.

This is burleſque enough of itſelf, and would alone be ſufficient to raiſe laughter in every one, who felt the proper force of the words;

PART I.

words; but it is as certain, at the ſame time, that there are thouſands, in whom they raiſe rapture and enthuſiaſm. From whence can this ſtrange effect, upon a particular ſet of people, proceed? I make no doubt, but that it is cauſed by long and early habitude, which has deſtroyed or changed the ideas in their minds, upon this occaſion, which thoſe words naturally excite at other times, producing no image, but what is confuſed, indiſtinct, and no doubt very different in one of the ſociety, from what it does in another. But let any engraver adorn their hymn book with a few cuts, let him draw men, women and children creeping into the ſide-hole, and neſtling in it like waſps in a hollow tree; and there is great reaſon to believe, that there are none of the faithful, however damaged in their underſtanding, but would ſee the abſurdity and naſtineſs of this their allegory; and would either laugh or be angry, according as pride happened to be more or leſs predominant in their ſeveral conſtitutions.

SECT. VI.

It is not the performance alone of thoſe High German artiſts, that ought to be examined by this rule; it is a certain teſt for the foundneſs of every piece of poetry whatſoever; but a teſt ſo ſevere, that the beſt of them all will ſometimes ſhrink at it. There are many deſcriptions in the great MILTON, which paſs very currently in blank verſe, and yet would make but a poor or diſguſting appearance in colours, and ſome of them entirely incapable of delineation.

Perhaps HOMER himſelf may not be, upon every occaſion, exempt from this charge. His deſcription of NEPTUNE's progreſs from Somothrace to Ægе (240 miles) in four ſtrides *, has been much admired by ſome critics

* ΤΡΙΣ ΜΕΝ ΟΡΕΞΑΤ' ΙΩΝ, ΤΟ ΔΕ ΤΕΤΡΑΤΟΝ
ΙΚΕΤΟ ΤΕΚΜΩΡ
ΑΙΓΑΣ. Iliad, 12.

From realm to realm three ample ſtrides he took,
And at the fourth the diſtant Ægе ſhook. POPE.

Madam DACIER has omitted this in her tranſlation; for which Mr. POPE condemns her; not for want of fidelity, but want of taſte, in paſſing over a ſtroke of poetry

PART I.

critics for its ſublimity; but it is certainly not in the power of APELLES or RAPHAEL to paint a God bounding acroſs the Ægean ſea, in any manner, that he ſhall not appear as like a man ſkipping over a kennel, as one egg is like another. An image altogether mean and ungodlike.

Wherein then conſiſts the ſublimity of this paſſage? Probably in words only; and that any effort of the mind, to turn thoſe words into imagery, would give it, inſtead of pleaſure, that uneaſineſs, which it ſuffers during the reſtleſs ſlumbers of a fever. The human mind cannot create any thing; it can only reflect, like a looking-glaſs, but a looking-glaſs where the images remain after the objects are removed: and the pleaſure we receive from the works of art, either in poetry that did honour to her author. LONGINUS, however, ſeems rather to ſide with her, as in his commendation of HOMER's Neptune, he has quoted ſome lines that precede, and ſome that follow this paſſage, without taking notice of it. So great a contrariety of ſentiment amongſt celebrated judges, ought to convince us of the inſufficiency of meer TASTE; and the neceſſity of looking for ſome rule, by which it may be directed.

etry

etry or painting, is greater or leſs, accord- SECT.
ing as the images produced by the artiſt do VI.
more or leſs reſemble thoſe contained in
this repoſitory †: Or, as POPE ſays,

True wit is nature to advantage dreſt,
Which oft was thought, but ne'er ſo well
expreſt.
Something whoſe truth, convinc'd, at ſight
we find,
That gives us back the image of our mind.

And the greateſt poet, whenever he miſtakes the bounds of his art ſo much, as to endea-

† Mr. ADDISON, whoſe papers upon *The Pleaſures of the Imagination* deſerve great encomiums, has, nevertheleſs, loſt much of the conſiſtency which might have appeared on that ſubject, by not eſtabliſhing a conſtant attachment to TRUTH, as the leading and inſeparable principle in all the works of art. For inſtance, he ſays, N°. 421. *Thoſe different alluſions are but ſo many different manners of ſimilitude; and, that they may pleaſe the imagination, the likeneſs ought to be very exact,* OR *very agreeable; as we love to ſee a picture where the reſemblance is juſt, or the poſture and air graceful.*

He is here as unfortunate in his illuſtration, as in his principle; for the *agreeable*, in thoſe caſes, cannot be ſeparated from the *exact*: and a poſture, in painting, muſt be a *juſt reſemblance of* what is graceful in nature, before it can hope to be eſteem'd *graceful*.

your

PART vour to repreſent to others, what the eye
I. hath not ſeen, nor the ear heard; altho' he may flatter himſelf, like BAYES, that his attempt is *great*, yet the application of the rule, ſuggeſted in this Section *, will never

* I ſuſpect that HORACE had an eye to this method of criticiſm in the commencement of his art of poetry.

Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Jungere ſi velit, et varias inducere plumas,
Undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
Deſinat in piſcem mulier formoſa ſuperne;
Spectatum admiſſi riſum teneatis amici?
Credite, Piſones, iſti tabulæ fore librum
Perſimilem, cujus, velut ægri ſomnia, vanæ
Fingentur ſpecies; ut nec pes, nec caput uni
Reddatur formæ. Pictoribus atque poetis
Quidlibet audendi ſemper fuit æqua poteſtas.
Scimus; et hanc veniam petimuſque damuſque viciſſim.
Sed non ut placidis coeant immitia; non ut
Serpentes avibus geminentur, tigribus agni.

Here, as in many other places, that excellent critic illuſtrates the beauties and defects of poetry, by alluſions made to painting; which he is generally thought to do, only becauſe poetry happen'd to be his theme at that time; and that, had he been to treat of painting, he would have *vice verſa* illuſtrated painting, by alluſions made to the operations of the ſiſter art.

There may be perhaps, another reaſon aſſigned that may make the alluſions in the caſe actually before us more

never fail to convince the judicious of its being monſtrous and ridiculous. SECT. VI.

more proper and conducive than if the caſe were reverſ'd. The uſe of alluſions, as has been already hinted in this Eſſay, is to eſtabliſh obſcure or dubious truths, by the aid of ſimilar truths that are more obvious. Lines and colours are of a more determined nature, and ſtrike the mind more immediately than words; which, before they can produce any effect, muſt be form'd by the mind itſelf, into pictures; and conſequently require a more tedious, and more difficult proceſs. This HORACE himſelf expreſſes, in another part of the ſame work, where ſpeaking of theatrical repreſentations, which are a mixture of poetry and painting, he ſays,

Segnius irritant animos demiſſa per aurem,
Quam quæ ſunt oculis ſubjecta fidelibus, et quæ
Ipſe ſibi tradit ſpectator.

Upon this conſideration it is, that he makes uſe of a ſimilitude borrowed from the art of painting, which condemns the extravagancies and incongruities of certain poets, by ſhewing that the like would be in a painter unpardonable and ridiculous.

The hopes of finding ſomething to confirm my conjecture concerning the meaning of this paſſage of HORACE, induced me to look into many of his commentators, particularly DACIER and SANADON, but I found nothing there that pointed towards it. I obſerved however at the ſame time, that thoſe learned Frenchmen, in their tranſlations, had entirely paſſed over the word

PART II. *æqua*, which is join'd to *poteſtas* in the 10th line; and that the former underſtood *petimuſque damuſque viciſſim*, to relate to poets and critics. In this he appears to have very much miſtaken his author's meaning; as there had been no mention at all of critics, and that it would have been very abſurd in HORACE to have ſaid, that critics claim'd a right to boldneſs and invention, that put them upon a level with poets. I will therefore endeavour to give a general ſenſe of thoſe 13 lines, in a manner that will make them conſiſtent with the truth of things, with one another, and probablywith the intention of the author.

" If to a human face a painter ſhould join the neck
" of a horſe, with wings of various colours; collecting
" in like manner, the other members from different
" animals, ſo that the breaſt of a fair woman ſhould
" terminate in a fiſh's tail: would not you, who are
" connoiſſeurs, think the ſpectacle extremely ridicu-
" lous? And yet, believe me, nothing can be more
" akin to this picture, than a poem, whoſe unaccount-
" able images, like a ſick man's dreams, are ſuch,
" that no one part has any manner of relation to
" another. Painters and poets have always had an
" equal right to be bold in their compoſitions.
" This we know, and it is by this equal right, that we
" poets muſt not dare to write, what a painter would
" not dare to paint; nor does the painter, on the other
" hand, expect any indulgence, but what he is willing
" to grant to his brother poet. But this indulgence
" never extends itſelf to thoſe, who loſe ſight of na-
" ture; nor allows either of the artiſts to introduce
" the dove ſporting with the ſerpent, nor the lamb
" with the tiger."

AN ESSAY ON RIDICULE.

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LAUGHTER, as I have before obſerved, *is the conſequence of Ridicule*, from whence it receives its name; but it is proper to take notice, that it is only a ſymptom, and not its diſtinguiſhing character. For laughter is produced upon many occaſions, where nothing like Ridicule is applied. A ſlap on the face may raiſe a laugh in the by-ſtanders; but if they were to burſt their ſides, it has no more pretenſion to Ridicule, than it has to *pathetic*

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*thetic eloquence**. It is reported of a man once eminent for his love of the public, that he was never known to laugh in the courſe of his life, but once; and that was, upon ſeeing his brother fall and break his arm. And there is nothing more common, than to obſerve people in health and affluence, laugh and ſneer at the bodily infirmities, weakneſs of intellects, thread-bare cloaths, and other marks of the diſtreſs or poverty of thoſe, who accidentally come in their way. Is this Ridicule? Thoſe refin'd philoſophers, who have diſcover'd in Man *moral feelings* and *inſtincts*, which are to ſerve him as a *criterion* of right and wrong, and are ſatisfied to receive this into the number; much good may it do them. There is great reaſon to believe, that JUVENAL would join with me in ſaying, *Hæc noſtri pars* PESSIMA *ſenſus*; and that there are few greater ſymptoms of moral turpitude in human nature. And yet my Lord SHAFTSBURY's antagoniſt, by making *Contempt* and *Ridicule* ſynonomous terms, has employed ſome pages of his book in proving, that this inhuman folly can never

* See the laſt Note of Sect. II.

be

be the teſt of truth †. Men of the beſt ſenſe will never fail to confound themſelves and others, when they are not at pains, by definitions and examples, to aſcertain the meaning of their terms. When we ſee Ridicule underſtood to be *pathetic eloquence* in one page, in another *contempt*; why not perjury, a gooſe, a gridiron, or a cheſt of drawers? By ſuch ſkilful management any one thing may be proved to have none of its own properties, but all the properties of any thing elſe, to the great advancement of knowledge.

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A man who even laughs at folly or vice, which are certainly the objects of pity or deteſtation, to ſound and liberal minds, gives us as bad a ſample of his morals as of his underſtanding. How comes it then, that a Ridicule of thoſe very follies and vices is followed by a laugh or ſmile from the moſt humane? To me it appears very plain, that the laugh, in this caſe, is not a laugh ariſing from the contempt of the perſon or thing ridiculed; but a laugh of pleaſure, from the

† *Eſſays on the Characteriſticks*, Sect. V. at the beginning.

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art itſelf, and of applauſe to the artiſt. There are ſome philoſophers, who have derived laughter from pride, and from the pleaſure which we receive in comparing our own ſtrength with the infirmities of others. I know not upon what they ground this opinion, and it is foreign to my preſent ſubject to enter deep into the enquiry. But I am throughly convinced, from many obſervations, external and internal, that the motives I have here aſſign'd are true in the caſe of Ridicule, and perhaps it may ſerve as a hint for further diſcoveries. Why ſhould we indulge ourſelves in meer conjectures, to the diſadvantage of the human heart? Perhaps the ſneer and laugh of contempt which we ſo often with abhorrence obſerve, is not natural; but only affected, and put on to ſhew ſuperior parts and diſcernment. It is moſt commonly to be ſeen, not ſo much among the proud and ill-natured, as among the empty, the half-bred, and the half-witted; who I fancy are often led into this mean and monkey-like practice, by hearing men of acknowledg'd wit celebrated for *laughing at perſons and things*; which they take literally, not knowing that by theſe words is meant,

expoſing

expoſing thoſe perſons and things in a new and artful manner; and thereby exciting laughter in all thoſe whom they thus entertain, while they themſelves preſerve the greateſt ſerioufneſs and modeſty of countenance. PART II.

Thus much was neceſſary to premiſe, before we enter upon the ſecond kind of Ridicule, which conſiſts in the bare *repreſentation of what is improper in manners or actions*. It may be ſtiled, SIMPLE, DIRECT, or UNREFLECTED RIDICULE; and if it comes under the deſcription of the *art, which ſhews that to be ridiculous which is imagined to be ſo*, it is only by bringing the ridiculous out of obſcurity, and placing it in open day-light. And, indeed, as POPE ſays,

Vice is a creature of ſo vile a mien,
That, to be hated, needs but to be ſeen.

For this ſort of Ridicule is one of thoſe which ARISTOTLE, in his *Poetics*, calls *mimic arts*; and deriving all its merit from its obvious likeneſs, to what it propoſes to repreſent, has not the leaſt pretence to be received

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ceived as a teſt of truth; with whatſoever uſefulneſs it may be otherwiſe attended. It may be divided into ſeveral branches; but chiefly into the NARRATIVE, GRAPHIC, and DRAMATIC. I ſhall exemplify all theſe ſeparately; beginning with the GRAPHIC, or what is produced by the painter.

And of all thoſe artiſts, who have employed their pencils in repreſenting what they thought ridiculous in the manners of men, I know of none, who deſerves to be mentioned upon this occaſion, but the incomparable HOGARTH. Others there are, Dutch, Flemiſh, French, and Italians, who have painted life in all its calamitous circumſtances, of poverty, oppreſſion, bodily ſickneſs, and deformity. But ARISTOTLE *, and common ſenſe have long ago told us, that theſe things are not ridiculous; and to all, but the unfeeling, are the objects of com-

* Η ΔΕ ΚΩΜΩΔΙΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ, ΩΣΠΕΡ ΕΙΠΟΜΕΝ, ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ ΦΑΥΛΟΤΕΡΩΝ ΜΕΝ, ΟΥ ΜΕΝΤΟΙ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΑΣΑΝ ΚΑΚΙΑΝ, ΑΛΛΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΣΧΡΟΥ ΕΣΤΙ ΤΟ ΓΕΛΟΙΟΝ ΜΟΡΙΟΝ. ΤΟ ΓΑΡ ΓΕΛΟΙΟΝ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΑΜΑΡΤΗΜΑ ΤΙ, ΚΑΙ ΑΙΣΧΟΣ ΑΝΩΔΥΝΟΝ, ΚΑΙ ΟΥ ΦΘΑΡΤΙΚΟΝ. *Ariſt. Poetic.* cap. 5.

paſſion, and not of laughter. It was reſerved for our ingenious countryman, to expoſe upon immortal canvaſs the faſhionable follies, vices and affectations of his cotemporaries. He has gone ſtill farther, and by producing his repreſentations in ſerieſes, and ſhewing the frightful, tho natural tendency of thoſe follies, has adminiſter'd one of the moſt practical incitements to virtue, and fulfilled the moſt material duty of a moral philoſopher; and that by a language, which all men underſtand, and which makes the quickeſt and ſtrongeſt impreſſion upon their minds *.

This is employing a very extraordinary talent in a way, which greatly deſerves the thanks of the public. Let us ſee next, whether this talent, like many other good things, may not be abuſed in its turn; and render'd hurtful to ſociety, by ridiculing thoſe actions which are innocent or praiſe-worthy.

* See the laſt Section of Part I. with the notes upon it.

But

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But when we conſider the nature of this ſort of Ridicule, ever ſo ſlightly, it will appear, that whenever it takes effect at all, it is always from its being *true Ridicule*; that is, *giving a repreſentation of what is truly ridiculous.* And ſuch is its ſimplicity, that there never can be any fallacy attending it, except by the means of a downright lie, in attributing an action or circumſtance, in itſelf ridiculous, to a perſon, to whom it does not belong.

For inſtance, ſuppoſe Mr. HOGARTH, to expoſe the odiouſneſs of drunkenneſs and quarrelling in men of important ſtations, ſhould paint two magiſtrates in their fur-gowns ſprawling on the floor, and battering one another, with countenances that breathed *ſcoundrel* and *raſcal* as emphatically as if the words flowed in labels out of their mouths; ſhould HOGARTH, I ſay, delineate ſuch a midnight converſation, with all the natural circumſtances of torn cravats, ſpilt claret, and broken tobacco-pipes, which his lively fancy would preſently ſuggeſt to him, the piece could not fail of being uſeful as well as comical. But ſhould he, to ſerve

the

the vile purpoſes of a party, or to gratify a private grudge, (I beg his pardon for the ſuppoſition,) ſhould he write under theſe figures, *This is Mr.*------ *and this is Mr.*------uſing the names of two men moſt eminent for their ſobriety and diſcretion; or, if inſtead of writing, he ſhould inſert the features of thoſe worthy magiſtrates, the general Ridicule would be ſtill as juſt as it was before; and the artiſt would receive, at York or Carliſle, his uſual tribute of praiſe: but they, who were better inſtructed in the affairs of London, would be ſhocked at the performance, and would withdraw from the author that eſteem, which the reſt of his conduct had ſo juſtly acquired.

This, I will venture to ſay, is the plain ſtate of the caſe, with regard to the abuſes, that may happen in all the different ſpecies of REPRESENTATIVE Ridicule. And it is particularly the caſe of SOCRATES, which has been ſo often quoted to the diſadvantage of Ridicule in general, altho moſt unjuſtly; as it will eaſily appear, that SOCRATES fell not a ſacrifice, as is pretended, to wit

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wit and Ridicule, but to falſhood and miſ-repreſentation.

Thoſe who are acquainted with the character of that great man; his moderation and univerſal benevolence; his juſtneſs and elegance of thought; his courage and unſhaken fidelity in the defence of his country; and his conſtant endeavour to render all men as moderate, as virtuous, and as uſeful members of ſociety as himſelf: muſt be ſatisfied that ſuch a character had nothing in it, that was ridiculous, and that it was entirely out of the reach of Ridicule. Of this the conduct of ARISTOPHANES was likewiſe a proof. He was very ſenſible of the difficulties, he had to encounter; he knew, that his talents could not be employed with ſucceſs againſt any thing, that was not ridiculous in itſelf; and therefore took advantage of the ignorance of the multitude, already prejudiced by the heathen prieſts, and the leaders of a faction; and exhibited to them a SOCRATES of his own creation, ridiculous to an extreme degree; and in every reſpect the oppoſite of him, whom it was ſaid to repreſent. If the event of this repreſentation proved fatal to that

that excellent philoſopher, we muſt blame the villany, not the wit of the poet; and we muſt not lay to the charge of Ridicule a misfortune, which will equally attend the moſt ſerious indictment, when it happens to be founded upon facts, that are either feigned or unfairly ſtated.

So much for the GRAPHIC and DRAMATIC *.

Of the NARRATIVE Ridicule there are inſtances in the *Characters of* THEOPHRASTUS, LA BRUYERE, PETRONIUS, *Memoirs of the houſe of* Brandenburgh, *&c.*

* Under the article of *dramatic Ridicule*, may be properly put thoſe philological pieces of Ridicule, which are meant to expoſe affectation, awkwardneſs, and bad taſte in writing and diſcourſe, and which have been often, and ſucceſsfully employed by the beſt critics. Of this ſort are the *Lexiphanes* and other pieces of LUCIAN; the *Limoſin* and other chapters of RABELAIS; SWIFT'S *Memoirs of P. P.* His *Tritical eſſay on the faculties of the mind*; *Polite converſation*; *Meditations on a broom-ſtick*, &c. and, like all the different ſpecies of this kind of Ridicule, are capable of being miſapplied, by having the names of perſons affixed to them, whom perhaps they reſemble not at all, or only in part.

Theſe

PART II. These ſpecies of mimic Ridicule are ſometimes to be found ſingle, ſometimes compounded; and often acquire a new name by the compoſition. As,

The THEATRICAL Ridicule, which is a compound of the *graphic* and *dramatic*; the actor performing the function both of the painter and poet. This ſometimes likewiſe receives the narrative Ridicule; as, when an actor, in the character of Sir *John Falſtaff*, gives a deſcription of his recruits in his march to Coventry.

Sometimes the NARRATIVE Ridicule, is interſperſed with the DRAMATIC, as in the *Trimalchio* of PETRONIUS, *Payſan parvenu* of Marivaux, *Joſeph Andrews*, *Pompey the little*, &c. †

It

† *Don Quixote*, for ſome things, may be ranked amongſt thoſe *repreſentations of real life*, as in the character of *Sancho*, and others. There are likewiſe ſtrokes of the *argumentative Ridicule* in the character of *Parſon Adams*, and other characters in thoſe inſtructing novels written by Mr. FIELDING. The intention of the preſent *Eſſay*, is not to enumerate all the different ways

It would be endleſs to relate the various ſhapes in which this REPRESENTATIVE Ridicule has appeared; but they all agree ſo much in the general character of being *pictures of life and manners*, and are ſo much the ſame in their nature and properties, that there does not appear occaſion for more than one ſhort ſection to explain the whole theory of them. It is a ſort of Ridicule, that may be of uſe in giving lively impreſſions of known truths; but whoever is at the pains to prove, that it can never be a teſt of truth, will have the pleaſure of arguing without the trouble of an opponent; ſince it never was applied in ſubjects of ſpeculation, and, even in its own province of repreſenting the deformities of life and manners, cannot prove its own juſtneſs, with regard to the application, but by extraneous evidence and aſſiſtance. PART II.

There is reaſon however to ſuſpect, from ſeveral paſſages in the *Eſſays upon the characteriſticks*,

ways, in which the different kinds and ſpecies of Ridicule may be mixed, but only to give ſome general hints of thoſe principles, by which a more exact diſcuſſion may be made.

PART II. *teriſticks*, that, while the author ſpeaks of Ridicule in general, he only means this MIMIC ſort, as in page 46. *Again, it may be obſerved, that the conſequences of Ridicule, with regard to ſpeculative inſtruction and enquiry, are of a very different nature from thoſe which relate to morals and action: to the firſt it muſt ever be an enemy; but to the latter it may be an enemy or a friend, according as it is fairly or diſhoneſtly applied.* If he means, I ſay, only the MIMIC Ridicule, his aſſertion has been ſufficiently confirmed and exemplified in this ſection. The ſubject is too ſimple to admit of any difference of opinion concerning it; and cannot, in itſelf, incur either praiſe or blame. The only Ridicule, whoſe legality is worth the diſputing, is that which has been treated of in the firſt part of this *Eſſay*. It was that alone, which could give rife to this controverſy; being a weapon often uſed by the learned and ingenious, who never ſeem in fact, as has been obſerved by Lord SHAFTSBURY, to have queſtioned its lawfulneſs, unleſs when it happened to be in the enemy's hands.

To conclude. It has been often recommended to thoſe, who take upon them the inſtruction of mankind; that they ſhould convey their leſſons in ſuch a way, as might render them *agreeable* as well as *uſeful*: tho this was meant, like putting ſugar into a bitter potion, only to render it more palatable, and to be more willingly ſwallowed by the patient; without its being looked upon as any part of the medicine itſelf. But, if what has been ſet forth in the firſt part of this *Eſſay*, with regard to the ingredients which compoſe Ridicule and pleaſantry in writing, is found to be true; if *appeals to experience* are the beſt teſt of truth; if thoſe appeals are *leaſt ſubject to fallacy*, when made to *facts the moſt vulgar* and *familiar*; if in the moſt *ſerious* queſtions, ſuch wherein the welfare of mankind is chiefly intereſted, *the entertainment riſes in proportion to the familiarity of the known truths*, by the application of which any falſhood in thoſe *important* points is detected: if, I ſay, theſe things are ſo, then it will be eaſy to perceive a more then accidental connection betwixt

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PART II. the *utile* and the *dulce*; it will be eaſy to perceive, that in ſpeculative, as well as in active life, *the ways of Wiſdom are really ways of pleaſantneſs*; and that a true philoſopher, that is, a man of candour, ſenſe and knowledge, has a better chance than ordinary of improving the underſtandings of thoſe with whom he converſes, at the very inſtant that he makes them laugh.

FINIS.

A

LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

EARL of ——

Concerning the AFFAIR of

Elizabeth Canning.

By a CLERGYMAN.

LONDON,
Printed for T. SEDDON at *Homer*'s Head in the *Poultry*. MDCCLIII.

[Price one Shilling.]

THE
EDITOR'S *Advertiſement.*

THE Nobleman to whom this Letter was addreſs'd, thinking it of general Utility, has permitted it to be printed. And, as he is ſenſible of the Regard which the Gentleman who wrote it pays to the Publick Good, he is under no Apprehenſion of his diſapproving of the Publication, tho done without his Conſent.

For the Eaſe and Satisfaction of the Reader, the Editor has put References, at the bottom of the Pages, to the ſeveral Paſſages in the Pamphlets alluded to in this Letter, and has likewiſe inſerted ſome whole Paragraphs from the News-Papers, &c. that are now difficult to be met with.

A

LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

EARL of ——

My LORD,

I Hope your Lordſhip received the letter I ſent laſt Friday, by *Richard* along with Lady ——'s tea and dimmity. I ſhould have given you then, as you probably expected, my opinion concerning the affair of *Elizabeth Canning*; but I fancy the firſt ſight of this, which, if I may believe the heap of memorandums that lye upon the table before me, will have more the ſize of a book than a letter, will make a very plauſible excuſe for my delay. Indeed, my dear Lord, there is nothing I undertake with more alacrity and chearfulneſs

than whatever tends to your amuſement, eſpecially when I perceive it to be connected with your inſtruction, which was many years my ſole employment, and is ſtill part of the duty of my peculiar function: but my eyes are now ſo weak, that I can neither read or write any thing without frequent intermiſſions.

The ſtory, as your Lordſhip obſerves, is very puzzling, and ſo it appears to the inhabitants of this great city, where it has been the univerſal ſubject of controverſy for many weeks, and the majority ſeem ſtill to be of opinion that the firſt account was the truth, if we may judge by the late proceedings of the grand jury, of which your news papers I ſuppoſe have given you the particulars.

It is but lately, that I myſelf have had any knowledge of this affair. The melancholy event which brought me to town, hindered me from attending to what was doing in it, and perhaps I ſhould to this hour have remained in ignorance, had not my attention been awakened by ſeeing a pam-

pamphlet advertiſed on the ſubject by Mr. *Fielding*.

Your Lordſhip knows the value I ſet upon every thing that is written by that author, who has ſucceeded ſo well in every ſubject he has undertaken, either of buſineſs or pleaſantry; and I with great reaſon expected one or other of theſe from the twelvepenny worth I ſaw advertiſed. And, perhaps there are none of his performances that more diſcover the ingenuity of the man of wit, the diſtinctneſs of the lawyer, or the politeneſs and candour of the gentleman.

But while I admired the ſtile and compoſition of this pamphlet, and the ingenious, and at the ſame time unadorned method, in which Mr. *Fielding* defended the cauſe of *Canning*, I could not help being ſurprized to find upon what ſlight grounds he and many other ſenſible men, had founded their belief of her veracity; and that they ſhould be ſatisfied with evidence that ſeems to be in no manner adequate to the nature of the facts meant to

be proved by it: eſpecially when a life is concerned, of which our laws and cuſtoms are in moſt caſes extremely tender.

It is reported about town, as you may ſee by the news papers, that there are ſeveral evidences to the *alibi* of the gypſy *Squires*, and other counter evidences: but as I know nothing certain concerning them, I ſhall confine myſelf, in the opinion you do me the honour to aſk, to the proofs that were produced before and at the trial of *Squires*, as they appear in the *Seſſions paper*, *Mr.* Fielding's *ſtate of the caſe*, and other *papers* publiſhed by the friends of *Canning*, not thinking any other proof neceſſary to convince thoſe who are unprejudiced that her relation is falſe. Yet in doing this I ſhould be ſorry to be ſuſpected of meaning any reflection upon the Juſtices, Judges, or Jury who concurred in the condemnation of *Squires*; ſince if I ſhould prove beyond doubt my whole aſſertion, it will amount to no more than to ſhew the power of prepoſſeſſion upon honeſt, diſintereſted and compaſſionate

ſionate minds, and how cautious we ought to be in allowing any degree of weight to perſonal credit, and character, in oppoſition to the general evidence of things.

Mr. *Fielding* very candidly owns, that there is the *higheſt degree of improbability* attending the circumſtances related by *Elizabeth Canning*, and only inſiſts upon their *not amounting to an impoſſibility*. He is too much a philoſopher, and too much a maſter of language to mean any more by a fact's being *poſſible*, than that it implies no contradiction in itſelf, and in that ſenſe no doubt the ſtory of *Canning* is *poſſible*; and ſo it would have been if ſhe had gone a little farther, and ſaid ſhe had been dead and buried during the time ſhe was miſſing. For this is *poſſible*, and all that we could object to the relation of it is, that it is extremely *unuſual* for dead people to return to life, and therefore we are not warranted to believe it without ſome proof *unuſually* ſtrong.

Thus to bring a fact within the compaſs of poſſibility, there is nothing required but

that it ſhould not contradict itſelf; but to make it probable, it is likewiſe required that it ſhould not be contradictory to ordinary experience: for in proportion to the ſeveral degrees in which it is removed from common experience, it acquires an appearance of falſhood, and to entitle it to belief, muſt be ſupported by evidence apparently true, to as great or greater degree than the fact which it means to prove, is apparently falſe.

This, your Lordſhip knows, is the general and leading principle in all enquiries concerning probable evidence; and upon this principle therefore give me leave to examine, firſt the ſtory of *Canning*, and then the proof of it, weighing one againſt the other.

Firſt, as to the ſtory itſelf, it is ſo far from being like any thing that was ever heard or ſeen before, that to relate it as a truth, looks like an inſult upon the common ſenſe of mankind, as will appear to any one, who will try to anſwer the following queries.

Was

Was it ever known that any plurality of human creatures were actuated by the same kind of delirium, or ever concurred unanimously for any time in the same passion, caprice, or unaccountable whim? or was it ever known that any plurality of human creatures ever acted conjunctly but from vulgar and obvious motives of interest, safety, or pleasure?

To be more particular, was it ever known that two footpads, after having committed a robbery for which they were both liable to be hanged, instead of flying from the watch, or *battering the skull of the robbed person with their clubs*, to prevent the appearance in judgment against them, ever made the robbed person a partner in their flight?

Was it ever known that two ruffians after having committed a robbery, and as they had great reason to believe a murder*, did ever persist in carrying

* We apprehend the author alludes to her being knocked down and continuing some hours in a fainting fit; which, to ignorant men, and in the dark, must bear a very great resemblance to death.

or dragging the carcaſe of the murdered perſon ten miles, with much fatigue and hazard of being met; without its being poſſible for imagination to ſuggeſt any benefit, they could propoſe to themſelves by this enterprize?

Was it ever read in any of the records of iniquity, that an old bawd and her aſſociates were ſo ignorant of their own trade, as to think of winning a young girl to the ways of lewdneſs by hunger and cold; or to raiſe the price of her beauty by ſtarving her black in the face?

Was it ever known that a number of people, no leſs than nine*, of bad characters, and equally involved in guilt which already amounted to felony, and was verging every hour towards murder, were ſo quiet and unanimous in their cruel proceedings for the ſpace of 28 days?

Was it ever known that ſuch a number of wretches ever choſe, for the ſcene of ſuch a tragedy, a room opening into the kitchen of a public bawdy houſe, upon a moſt

* See Mr. *Fielding*'s pamphlet, p. 45.

pub-

public highway, with a horſepond under its window, without any guard, or the ſmalleſt attention to the priſoner, whoſe dying groan might have brought them all to the gallows?

Was it ever known that a whole ſet of people guilty of ſuch crimes, remained quietly to be ſeized by the officers of juſtice, two days after they knew their guilt was diſcovered; and knew at the ſame time that the badneſs of their characters would make the ſlighteſt evidence be ſufficient for their conviction?

Any one of the circumſtances, alluded to in the foregoing queries, would be ſufficient to throw an air of falſhood upon a ſtory, altho' likely in every other particular. What ſhall we ſay, then, of a ſtory which is compoſed altogether of ſuch circumſtances? Nothing, but that either the circumſtances are falſe, or that God Almighty has created a ſet of people at *Enfield Waſh*, totally different in all their deſires, fears, paſſions, and apprehenſions, from the reſt of mankind.

I ſay

I ſay nothing of the improbability of the girl's returning ten miles, through a train of open inns, and gentlemens houſes, without ſeeking relief from her hunger, reſt for her weakneſs, or protection from her murderers, who ſhe had the ſtrongeſt reaſon to believe were hard in purſuit of her; becauſe, there are found ſuch particularities of temper, and underſtanding in particular perſons, as to account for almoſt any deviation in them from thoſe general laws of human nature, by which large ſocieties are influenced with much certainty and uniformity.

For a like reaſon I will omit troubling your Lordſhip, with a repetition of the various phyſical improbabilities, which you have already been informed of by ſeveral of the pamphlets I have ſent you, particularly by Mr. *Dodd*'s; that I may come to a new ſet of improbabilities, that have been hitherto overlooked. Theſe are not, like the reſt, improbabilities, ariſing from what *Canning* told of her ſtory, but from what ſhe did not tell.

To

To explain what I mean by this, it is neceſſary, that I ſhould give you a few lines upon the theory of lying; an art, of which, in your moſt infant years, you never knew the practice. And ſurely, if a man were to thank the Giver of all good, for any one bleſſing more than another, it ought to be for having beſtowed upon him a heart utterly un-inclined to deceit, with an underſtanding to conceive the miſerable conſequences of it. For of all the trades under the ſun, that of a liar, who expects to be believed, is the moſt difficult. This ariſes from many cauſes, but I ſhall only mention one, as it is neceſſary for my preſent purpoſe: and that is the difficulty of managing with regard to circumſtances in general; which it is equally dangerous to inſert, or to let alone. If a lie is made circumſtantial, with the names and deſcriptions of perſons, places, dates, and other furniture, it will be plauſible and gain immediate credit; but then every one of thoſe circumſtances, which at firſt gave it

authority,

authority, may adminiſter means of trace-ing, and diſcovering its falſhood.

If to avoid this, the relater gives no names of perſons, places, or particulari-ties, the ſtory will juſtly be look'd upon as a lie from the beginning.

Upon this principle ariſes thoſe queries concerning the ſtory of *Canning*, which I hinted above, ſuch as,

How came ſhe to be ſo bare in her re-lation of the various incidents, that muſt have happen'd between *Moorfields* and *En-field*; during which journey, there muſt have been many things both ſaid and done by the two ruffians ſhe deſcribed? To an-ſwer this, ſhe has told us, ſhe was in a fit; and perhaps it had been prudent in her to have ſaid, her fit continued all the time ſhe remained in *Wells*'s houſe. If ſhe had, it would have only made a new phyſical oddity, to be accounted for by Mr. *Dodd*, and I ſhould have had no more queſtions of this ſort to aſk. But unhappily ſhe has not left herſelf that means of evaſion.

How

How came it then, that ſhe liv'd 28 days in *Wells*'s houſe, without being able to give the leaſt account of what paſſed in it: altho' ſhe had an opportunity, through a large hole, to ſee and hear every thing that was done in the kitchen; a place which, at that time of the year, muſt have been the moſt frequented in the houſe, and where there muſt have always been light to diſcover to her their motions, while the darkneſs of the hay-loft would always take away all fear of her curioſity being obſerv'd?

How comes it, that ſhe gave no account of *Fortune Natus* and his wife *Sarah*, who, by the evidence of *V. Hall*, ſtill urged to be true by her and her friends, lay every night in that kitchen?

To abridge the enquiry, and reduce it to a ſhorter catechiſm. What happen'd to *Elizabeth Canning*, during the ſix hours and a half that ſhe was upon the road betwixt *Moorfields* and *Enfield*? Her own account will inform your Lordſhip: NOTHING.

What

What happen'd in the whóle hour ſhe remain'd in mother *Wells*'s kitchen? Next to NOTHING.

What happen'd to her during the 28 days that ſhe was confined in mother *Wells*'s houſe? NOTHING.

What happen'd to her during the ſix hours that ſhe was upon the road from *Enfield* to her mother's houſe? NOTHING.

Never ſure was there a hiſtory that ſtood leſs in need of abridgment. But altho' we ſhould muſter out a catalogue of improbabilities attending this affair, more numerous than that of the ſtars, ſtill, as Mr. *Fielding* very juſtly obſerves, there is no impoſſibility in it; and altho' utterly incredible in itſelf, may become the object of belief, by proper evidence, that may make the belief of its being true, more eaſy than the belief of its being falſe.

Accordingly we find, that ſome of *Canning*'s advocates have endeavoured to oppoſe improbability againſt improbability; and have urged, that ſuppoſing her ſtory

to

to be falſe, we are put to as great a difficulty to account for her motives, as we are to account for thoſe of *Squires*, and her aſſociates, when we ſuppoſe it to be true.

This proceeds, in great meaſure, from the ſuperficial, and hear-ſay manner, in which they receive the ſtory from one another, without looking narrowly into the original and authentick accounts of it.

It would be extremely diverting to your Lordſhip, to hear ſome of thoſe good people, puzzling themſelves with difficulties of their own raiſing; and aſking queſtions, which can admit of no *anſwers*, but what have much the air of croſs purpoſes. For inſtance,

How could Canning *be at mother* Wells's *houſe upon any other occaſion, without* Wells, *and the reſt, being able to give an account of her, when it was their intereſt ſo to do?*

Anſwer. She never had been in *Wells*'s houſe.

If ſhe never had been in Wells's *houſe, how came ſhe ſo exactly to deſcribe it?*

Anſwer. She did not deſcribe it at all.

How could ſhe fix upon a place ſo far from home, and where it appears ſhe never had been before?

Anſwer. She did not fix upon it at all.

How could a young girl of a good character, be ſo wantonly cruel, as to form a deſign, of taking away the lives of ſo many people, who had never injured her?

Anſwer. She never had any deſign againſt them, or their lives.

How could ſo young, and ſimple a girl contrive ſo artful a ſtory?

Anſwer. It is not an artful, but on the contrary, an exceeding ſtupid ſtory. An artful ſtory, is ſuch a ſtory as *Tom Jones*, where the incidents are ſo various, and yet ſo conſiſtent with themſelves, and with nature, that the more the reader is acquainted with nature, the more he is deceived into a belief of its being true; and is with difficulty recall'd from that belief by

by the author's confeſſion from time to time of its being all a fiction. But what is there plauſible in the adventures of *Enfield Waſh*? What is there ſtrange or poetically fancied in the incidents of *robbing, knocking down — cry'd out murder — ſtopt my mouth with a handkerchief — you bitch, why don't you go faſter? — carrying to a bawdy houſe — offer of fine cloaths — cut your throat if you ſtir?* Such is the *variety* of theſe incidents, which owe all their *ſtrangeneſs* to the ſenſeleſs manner in which they have been, with reſpect to time and place, jumbled together.

There is nothing *ſurpriſing* in ſuch ſtories, except their meeting with any degree of belief; and that ſurpriſe commonly ceaſes, whenever we ſet ourſelves coolly to examine into their origin, and trace them to their fountain head.

A wild *Indian*, ſuddenly landed in *England*, would think the firſt houſe he ſaw of four ſtories high, a work more than human. But after ſtanding by a bricklayer for half an hour, and ſeeing

that this ſtupendous fabric was mounted up only by laying one brick quietly by the ſide of another, his wonder ceaſes, and, inſtead of four ſtories, he would not be ſurpriſed at a houſe of four and twenty.

Let us therefore, my Lord, endeavour to follow the affair of *Canning*, brick by brick, and ſee whether we cannot, if not truly, at leaſt probably and eaſily, account for every ſtep of her conduct, and likewiſe for all the belief that attended her relation, without being obliged to give the leaſt credit to any one circumſtance contain'd in it; each of which, as I have already ſhewn, carries the word LIE, in great letters upon its forehead.

In doing this I ſhall diſtinguiſh, by a different character, what I relate as certain facts, from thoſe conjectures of my own that are neceſſary for their connection; that you may yourſelf judge how ſimple and few thoſe conjectures are, and that I may not ſeem to impoſe my own perſonal credit and opinion upon

your Lordſhip, while I am endeavouring to inſpire you with a diffidence for perſonal credit and opinion in general.

Firſt, then, it is certain that *E. Canning was miſſing from the 1ſt of January at nine 'till the 29th at ten o'clock at night, when ſhe came to her mother's houſe.* Where ſhe was during this interval of time, or in what manner employed, we do not pretend to have diſcover'd, for if that could be done our conjectures would be loſt in certainty, and there would be an end of all reaſoning upon the ſubject. But hitherto no intelligence of that ſort has been receiv'd. In the mean time it is ſufficient, that there are various ways of employing a month, beſides walking up and down in mother *Wells*'s hay-loft. And if my good friend Sir ———, and the Doctor, ſhould inſiſt upon its being as difficult to conceive her being any where elſe, as to believe the truth of what ſhe relates; and that no conjecture can account for the miſerable ſtate in which, it is ſaid, ſhe return'd; it may

not be amiſs to hint to them that there are ſuch diſtempers as lyings-in and miſcarriages, to which young ſervant-maids of eighteen are very much ſubject; diſtempers that will hold them as long, and reduce them as low as has been related of *E. Canning*, eſpecially if attended and nurſed in the manner we may eaſily ſuppoſe her to have been. It may not be amiſs to hint, that thirteen ſhillings and ſix-pence, with the ſale of a gown and pair of ſtays, is hardly more than ſufficient to defray the expences of ſuch an operation; even altho' no part of it was expended in a chriſtening, a wet nurſe, or a coffin, which, not to continue any idea of horror in your Lordſhip's imagination, might have been all provided by that moſt humane inſtitution, the Foundling-Hoſpital. Our friends may perhaps aſk: How comes it that the people with whom ſhe paſſed this month do not make the diſcovery, when by letting it alone they ſacrificed the life of an innocent perſon? But this is eaſily accounted for, by ſuppoſing them involved

involved with *Canning* in ſome guilt, which makes their own preſervation depend upon their ſecrecy, or that their friendſhip for her makes them prefer her ſafety and character to the life of an old gipſey. When we ſee hardly a Seſſions paſs at the Old-Bailey, without inſtances of wretches hazarding their ſalvation in the next world; and, what touches them much nearer, their ears in this, by perjuring themſelves to bring off their companions: we ought not to wonder if the ſame motives ſhould incline them to ſtay at home, when for ſo doing the law has ordain'd no puniſhment.

Nothing of all this is pretended to be true, but it is, what the common ſtory is not, extremely credible in itſelf; being no wiſe contradictory to our experience of the actions, paſſions and intereſts of mankind; no wiſe contradictory to the moral phænomena related of *E. Canning*'s character by Mr. *Fielding* and her friends; and no wiſe contradictory to certain

phyſical phænomena * of her health, related by Mr. *Dodd*; who, tho' but an indifferent logician, ſeems to be a very careful enquirer into things that relate more particularly to his own profeſſion.

A month of weeks, as ſhe calls it, being ſpent in ſome ſuch manner, *ſhe makes a ſhift*, with her firſt recovery of ſtrength, *to crawl home to her mother's houſe; ill-colour'd, lean, weak, and in an old gown and cap (or handkerchief) that did not belong to her.* The firſt queſtions were, no doubt, Where have you been? How came you into this frightful condition? What is become of your cloaths? Theſe are all queries that ſhe knew would be put to her at her return, and it was neceſſary to have ſome ſort of an anſwer to them; elſe ſhe muſt, by her ſilence, have paſs'd for a whore, and have been excluded from every honeſt family. What could ſhe anſwer? She could not tell them what we ſuppoſe to be the truth; and any excuſe,

* Mr. *Dodd*'s phyſical account, page 14.

altho'

altho' it ſhould not be believed, was better than none.

She therefore behaved with as much conduct and diſcretion as her unhappy ſituation would allow, and told them a lie, ſo general and void of circumſtances, that ſhe had reaſon to imagine it could not be farther traced, and ſo her character would remain at leaſt in a ſtate of doubt; which was gaining a great point as things ſtood with her at the time. Her lie required no ſort of invention, and only conſiſted of dry anſwers to the neceſſary queſtions that were aſked her, viz. *That ſhe had been robb'd of her cloaths and money, carried ſome miles out of town, and confined with hardly any victuals or drink, in a dark empty room.* This was the moſt particular deſcription ſhe could give of her place of captivity, and was a very blind direction for thoſe who might go in ſearch of it. She probably thought herſelf no leſs ſafe in ſaying, *that it was ſituated near the Hartford road, as ſhe knew by ſeeing the Hartford coach go by.* And, indeed, how

could ſhe imagine, that there was any perſon in the world ſo ſagacious as to be able to tell from the above deſcription, in which of all the houſes upon the *Hartford* road ſhe had been a priſoner? But here ſhe was miſtaken, and may perhaps ſome day repent her having been ſo deſcriptive. For *either the firſt night, or early Tueſday morning, one of her friends mentioned the houſe of mother Wells, ſhe being a moſt notorious woman* *.

The

* The reverend author of the letter is ſuppoſed here to allude to a caſe publiſh'd by *Canning*'s friends ten days after her return; which, for the ſatisfaction of the public, we ſhall ſubjoin entire. As likewiſe a paragraph from the *London Daily Advertiſer*, of *Wedneſday* the 31ſt of *Jan.* which muſt have been ſent to the printer the very day after ſhe came home; and by which it appears, that her friends had fixed upon *Wells*, and her houſe, before any of them had been down at *Enfield* to ſee either, or even before they had been with the ſitting alderman.

The CASE of *Elizabeth Canning*.

ELIZABETH CANNING, ſervant to Mr. *Lyon* in *Aldermanbury*, had leave given her to go and ſee her uncle and aunt on the firſt day of *January* laſt. As ſhe was returning home in the evening of the ſame day, ſhe was ſeized by two luſty fellows in *Moorfields*, directly at the

The innocent countenance and diſtreſſed appearance of the girl, joined with her good

the gates of *Bethlehem* hoſpital: After they had rifled her pockets, they took her into the middle walk of the ſaid fields, where they ſtripped her of her gown, apron, hat, &c. She crying out, murder! one of the fellows ſtruck her on the right temple, which immediately deprived her of her ſenſes. When ſhe recovered, ſhe found herſelf in an open road between the two robbers, who ſoon convey'd her to a houſe, in which ſhe ſaw an old woman and two young ones. The old woman told her if ſhe would do as they did, (which was whoring and thieving) ſhe ſhould want for *nothing*: But upon her refuſal, the old woman cut off her ſtays, and then forced her up a pair of ſtairs, with horrid imprecations, and threatning to cut her throat if ſhe made the leaſt noiſe. She was then confined in a *dark room*, and had only about a quartern loaf in ſtale and mouldy cruſts, and a gallon of water to ſupport her, during the whole time of her confinement, and *a little hay to lie on*. On the 29th of *January* ſhe eſcaped, by making *a hole in the boards of the window*, about four o'clock in the afternoon, and came to her mother's houſe, about ten at night, in a moſt miſerable condition.

When this unhappy young woman was aſked where ſhe had been, ſhe could give *no other account* than that ſhe had been confined in a houſe on the *Hertfordſhire* road, which ſhe knew, by ſeeing the coachman who drove her miſtreſs into that country paſs by, through a hole of the window.

The houſe of that notorious woman, well known by the name of mother *Wells*, between *Enfield Waſh* and *Wal'ham Croſs*, was immediately ſuſpected; and from many circumſtances, appears to be the diſmal priſon of this unhappy ſufferer, whoſe melancholy ſituation ſince

good character, had from the very firſt, ſuch an effect upon the good people of the neighbourhood, as to deprive them of all power of examination; ſo that they never doubted the truth of her ridiculous tale, and were only ſolicitous to know who

her miraculous eſcape, is worthy the compaſſion and charitable contributions of all public-ſpirited people, and every one who has any regard for the ſafety of their own children and relations, who are equally liable to the ſame inhuman and cruel uſage, as the beforementioned young perſon; who ſince her eſcape from the houſe of that monſter of a woman, has been in a moſt deplorable condition; the whole courſe of nature, having as it were been put out of its uſual action; ſhe has, through her uncommon and cruel uſage, been deprived of the natural effects of food, nothing having paſſed through her, ſince being firſt hurried away in the manner before mentioned, but by the art and indefatigable pains of the phyſician and apothecary who attended her, till the 7th of *February*, when ſhe had *an urinary evacuation*. All theſe circumſtances being duly conſidered, it is not doubted but a ſubſcription, or contribution will ſoon be raiſed, to enable the perſons who have undertaken to detect this notorious gang, to proſecute their good intention with the utmoſt vigour, as ſuch a neſt of villains is of the greateſt danger to the ſafety of all his majeſty's good ſubjects.

The truth of the above mentioned facts, we whoſe names are under written, (inhabitants in and about *Aldermanbury Poſtern*, who have known the above *Elizabeth Canning*

who were the wretches who had thus abuſed her; *and no ſooner was the name of* Wells *Canning* from her birth, to have always been a very ſober, honeſt and induſtrious girl) *are ready to atteſt.*

Francis Roberts.
Thomas Miles.
John Marſhall.
Robert Gerrard.
Jaſper Brydon.
Thomas King.

Caſes may be had *gratis*, and donations are taken in at the *Royal-Exchange Coffee-Houſe* in *Threadneedle-Street*; at *Lloyd's Coffee-Houſe* in *Lombard-Street*; at St. *Dunſtan's Coffee-houſe* in *Fleet-Street*; at Mr. *Say's*, Printer in *Newgate-Street*; and at Mr. *Francis Roberts's* in *Aldermanbury Poſtern*, who is appointed Treaſurer for carrying on the proſecutions.

Feb. 8th. 1753. *Virtue Hall*, one of the women ſworn to by *Elizabeth Canning*, made a confeſſion before the worſhipful Juſtice *Fielding*.

Paragraph from the London Daily Advertiſer of Wedneſday *Jan.* 31.

On Monday night the young woman, who was advertiſed as left in *Houndſditch* on New Year's day laſt, about nine in the evening, came home to her mother, who lives in *Aldermanbury Poſtern*, and gave the following extraordinary account of her being forced away and detained.

She had been at *Saltpetre Bank*, near *Roſemary-lane*, to ſee

Wells *ſuggeſted, though only from their own brains, but they were ſure that her houſe was the ſcene of all this villany.* Here all doubt and reaſon took their flight, and left nothing to direct the conduct of thoſe well-meaning *ſubſtantial tradeſmen*, but paſſion and enthuſiaſm.

To confirm their belief of what they no longer doubted, thoſe who knew any thing of *Wells*'s houſe or its ſituation, aſked her queſtions concerning it; to which, as ſhe might plainly perceive they were

ſee her uncle and aunt, who came with her as far as *Houndſditch* in her way home, where ſhe deſired them to return. She went from thence into *Moorfields* by *Bethlehem-wall*, as the nigheſt way home; there ſhe was met and attacked by two fellows, who pulled off her hat and gown, cut off her apron, then gagged her, and threatened her with bitter imprecations if ſhe cried out to cut her throat. They then forcibly carried her to *Enfield*, to a houſe kept by one mother *Wells*, near the *Waſh* by the ten mile ſtone, which place they reached about four o'clock in the morning. The fellows left her in that houſe, and ſhe has not ſeen them ſince. *The woman of the houſe* immediately cut off her ſtays with her own hands, and with the horrideſt execrations forced her into a room, where ſhe was kept upon bread and water. She broke her way through a window almoſt naked, and in that wretched condition came home. She left ſeveral unhappy young women in the houſe, whoſe misfortune ſhe has providentially eſcaped.

aſked

aſked with a friendly intention, and not with any deſign to entrap her, ſhe always anſwered, Yes. By which mēans ſhe might poſſibly have been furniſhed with ſome little knowledge of what ſhe was before totally ignorant; and her neighbours, like the boobies who go to aſtrologers, were amazed to hear her relate in the afternoon, what their queſtions had taught her in the morning. This method of proceeding is not only natural and probable, which is all I require of it, but it likewiſe appears, by ſeveral paſſages in their accounts, to have been actually their method. *I aſked her*, ſays Mr. *Scarrat* his depoſition at the *Old Bailey*, *if ſhe perceived a tanner's houſe near*, ſhe ſaid *ſhe believed there was*. I only mention this to ſhew how eaſy it would be to account for her giving ſome particulars relating to a place which ſhe never was near, even before ſhe was carried down to it, in caſe ſhe had given āny ſuch particulars; which it however does not appear ſhe did, by any thing that her friends have

yet

yet publiſhed, or that they lay'd before the jury.

However, her compaſſionate neighbours thus heated and perſuaded upon their own evidence of the guilt of *Wells*, and the truth of *Canning*'s ſtory, *upon the Wedneſday morning, hurried away the poor creature to repeat it all, before Mr.* Chitty *the ſitting alderman, in order to the proſecution of* Wells *and her gang*; *for the defraying of which a ſubſcription was ſet on foot.*

On Thurſday morning they ſet out, Canning, *her mother and other two women, in a coach; and ſeveral of their neighbours on horſeback, to examine into the affair, and to apprehend the criminals.* And now it will appear how little *Canning* was acquainted with her month's abode. For *although Mr.* Adamſon *was ſo good natured as to be there an hour or an hour and a half before the coach arrived; and having ſeen the room rode back to aſk* Canning *ſeveral queſtions concerning it*——— which were no doubt aſked and anſwered in the manner

manner I have already mentioned. Yet, *notwithſtanding all his queſtions ſhe was ſo ignorant, that after being ſeated ſome time on the dreſſer of the kitchen into which the room opened, which ſhe has ſince ſworn to be the place of her confinement, yet ſhe never ſaid, That is the room.* But, as Mr. *Adamſon* goes on to depoſe, *after having been carried up* (through a paſſage) *to examine the houſe, ſhe ſaid none of the rooms ſhe had ſeen was the room in which ſhe was confined. Then I aſked if there were any other rooms; they ſaid, yes; out of the kitchen (I had before been in it, but did not ſay ſo then, becauſe I had a mind to ſee if ſhe knew it) We had her up into it. She ſaid, This is the ſame room in which I was, but here is more hay,* &c. *

In all the depoſitions of the neighbours, beſides an extreme eagerneſs and impatience to communicate their own perſuaſion, there appears great credulity and ſimplicity, particularly in this of *Adamſon*, who certainly did not mean to inſtruct

* See the Seſſions Paper, p. 114.

Canning

Canning by his returning back to meet her; for if he had meant that, he would not only have aſked her *if the room had any hay in it*, or *a chimney in the corner*; but he would have aſked her if it did not go out of the kitchen; by which he would have ſaved her the fatigue of ſearching through all the rooms on the other ſide of the paſſage, and of letting herſelf be ſtupidly dragg'd up to the garrets to find the window through which ſhe made her eſcape, in hopes all the while of ſeeing *a room with hay in it*, of which ſhe had received the hint upon the road; and by that ſingle queſtion, concerning the door, would have enabled her to point to it as ſoon as ever ſhe entered the kitchen.

In ſhort, my Lord, it does not appear diſtinctly from any of the evidence produced at the *Old Bailey*, that *Canning* knew any thing at all of this room till ſhe was led into it by Mr. *Adamſon*; but that it was then, for the firſt time, ſhe was furniſhed with the knowledge of

thoſe

thoſe particulars, which ſhe afterwards put into her depoſition, before the juſtices, and the jury, at the triál. Such as *the bay, the chimney in the corner, the door out of the kitchen, the ſaddle, the baſon, and the tobacco mould*; and of every thing but *the jugg*, which, I ſuppoſe, is to be found in every houſe upon the road, and ſeems to be the only mark, beſides *ſome plaiſter being broken off from the outſide of the window*, by which Mr. *Adamſon* was directed to chuſe this room in preference to the reſt.

There has hitherto appeared no contrivance or romantic genius in *Canning*; nor has there appeared any occaſion for genius, in order to deceive men who had ſuch an appetite for being deceived.

The people of the houſe being brought before her, ſhe pitched upon Mary Squires, on account of her ſuperior age and uglineſs, *for the miſtreſs of the bawdy-houſe, who had in the miſtreſs-like manner ſhe related cut off her ſtays* *. *Hereupon ſhe and the reſt of*

* See the paragraph from the London Daily Advertiſer before inſerted.

Wells's *family were put into a cart and carried in triumph before Juſtice* Tyſhmaker, *who, upon the oath of* Canning, *and the concurring teſtimony of her friends, committed* Squires *and* Wells *to priſon.*

And here, ſeeing nothing worſe than human weakneſs and folly in the whole proceeding, I cannot forbear extending my tenderneſs to the poor creature whoſe falſhood I am endeavouring to detect; and do not ſee, when thus detected, that ſhe has been guilty of *the blackeſt, moſt premeditated, and audacious perjury, levelled againſt the lives of ſeveral innocent perſons,* as Mr. *Fielding* would repreſent it. There does not appear any thing *premeditated* or even voluntary in any of the proceedings of *Canning* againſt *Squires* and her companions. We ſee only a lie calculated without the leaſt view beyond that of excuſing herſelf at a time when her conduct ſtood greatly in need of an excuſe. All that followed was entirely owing to the inconſiderate zeal of her friends, which muſt at firſt have given her infinite comfort, by relieving

relieving her out of a desperate plunge; and which she durst not afterwards check, by not concurring with them in all their inventions, for fear of throwing her affairs back into that suspicious state out of which their warmth had drawn them. So that, by an unavoidable train, she was, in a manner, forced to confirm by perjury that lie which she had been forced to make. I say *forced*; for in cases where an affirmation or oath is offered, manifestly to acquit the person who makes it of some supposed guilt, it can never be reckoned voluntary; and is far from being so in the eye of the law, which has ever that tender regard to the souls of men, as not to allow an oath to be administered to those, who are suspected, from a regard to their own lives or characters, to be under any such temptation of perjuring themselves.

Upon the 6th of February *Mr.* Fielding, *at the earnest desire of Mr.* Salt *the attorney, undertook to examine into the affair. And next day* Canning *was brought before him, with her information ready drawn up by*

Mr. Salt, *to which ſhe ſwore and put her mark in his preſence* *.

But Mr. *Salt*, being a lawyer, knew that the law required two witneſſes in order to condemn any perſon of a capital offence†. *So a warrant was iſſued to apprehend* Virtue Hall, *who, upon the* 13*th, after ſome hours of proper management, was brought into*

* See Mr. *Fielding*'s pamphlet, page 32, *&c.*

† Previous to this examination of the 13th, which is all tranſcribed out of Mr. *Fielding*'s Pamphlet, there appears to have been one on the 8th, which has not fallen under the notice of the Author of this letter, nor mentioned by Mr. *Fielding*, tho' we learn it from the poſtſcript to the caſe of *Elizabeth Canning* already inſerted, and from the following paragraph in the Public Advertiſer of Friday the 9th of *February*.

On Wedneſday laſt, at the earneſt deſire of the Proſecutor, Mr. Juſtice *Fielding* undertook to examine into the robbery of the girl, who, in the beginning of *January* laſt, after having been robbed in *Moor-fields*, was carried by two men to a houſe in *Enfield-Marſh*, where ſhe was ſtript of her ſtays, and then confined in a miſerable room near a month, with no other ſuſtenance than a quartern loaf and a pitcher of water. On Thurſday evening a girl who lived in the houſe, and who was apprehended by a warrant from the Juſtice, was brought before him, and was under examination from ſix till twelve at Night; when, *after many hard ſtruggles and ſtout denials* of the truth, ſhe *at length confeſſed* the whole; by which means it is not doubted, but that all the actors of that cruel ſcene will be brought to the fate they deſerve.

Juſtice

Juſtice Fielding's *preſence, in tears and in a trembling condition. Upon this he endeavoured to comfort her, ſaying; Child, you need not be under any fear or apprehenſion, for if you will tell us the whole truth of the affair, I will give you my word and honour, as far as it is in my power, to protect you. She anſwered, ſhe would tell the whole truth. But, altho' the Juſtice continued to examine her in the kindeſt manner, ſhe was guilty of ſo many prevarications and contradictions, that he told her he would examine her no longer, and would leave her to ſtand or fall by the evidence againſt her; and, at the ſame time adviſed* Mr. Salt *to proſecute her as a felon, together with the gypſy woman. Upon hearing that ſhe was to be proſecuted as a felon,* and that her life was to be left to the evidence of perſons, who ſhe muſt think actuated either by the higheſt degree of madneſs or wickedneſs; ſhe thought it was better to truſt to Juſtice *Fielding*'s word of honour than their evidence; *and ſaid ſhe would tell the whole truth. So after aſking her a few queſtions, which he ſays ſhe anſwered with more appearance of*

truth than ſhe had done before, he ſent her out with Mr. Salt *the attorney, who in two hours returned with an information in writing, to which ſhe ſwore and ſet her mark before Juſtice* Fielding.

That I may not trouble your Lordſhip with any repetitions, I ſhall refer my remarks upon the evidence of *Virtue Hall*, till things come before the *Old Bailey*: and ſhall only ſay here, that it was no other than what, bating the ſtile, ſhe might have made, without the help of Mr *Salt*; being only a repetition of the few circumſtances, before related by *Canning*; and which had been, for a fortnight preceding, the converſation of every alehouſe within the bills of mortality.

That Juſtice *Tyſhmaker* and Juſtice *Fielding* might be miſled by the ſimple manner of *Canning* is very poſſible. It is likewiſe poſſible, that thoſe who cenſure them for it at this time, cenſure them improperly, by being acquainted with circumſtances, relating to the affair, unknown to thoſe magiſtrates.

The

The Event has abundantly juſtified their conduct; ſince, whether the ſtory turns out to be true or falſe, the appearances which are thought ſufficient, in a court of juſtice ſo fair and ſo merciful as the *Old Bailey*, to condemn the accuſed, muſt be more than ſufficient to take off any cenſure from a Juſtice of peace for the commitment.

Let us therefore proceed to the trial, where your Lordſhip will ſee a degree of careleſsneſs, which cannot be accounted for upon any other principle but the force of prepoſſeſſion; which ſerved thoſe concerned as an INWARD EVIDENCE of the gypſy's guilt, and made them think any enquiry needleſs, farther than the meer forms of law required.

And yet, perhaps the *Old Bailey* never ſaw a trial where there were, *prima facie*, more circumſtances to render the accuſation ſuſpicious. For beſides the numberleſs improbabilities that appear to the dulleſt and moſt ignorant in the relation of the accuſer; there appear, at the firſt hearing of the two evidences, *Canning* and

Hall, who join in a pretended proof of the principal facts, circumſtances that ought to bring their teſtimony into ſuſpicion, and which it required ſome pains and queſtioning to remove.

There is, in the firſt place, an agreement and a diſagreement in their relations, which are of a quite contrary nature to the agreement and diſagreement, which are ever known to exiſt in relations honeſtly given by different perſons concerning the ſame tranſaction. For in accounts that are delivered with truth by two different perſons concerning the ſame affair, there will be different circumſtances conſtantly told by the different perſons, according as their different memories and apprehenſions ſuggeſt them to the relators; but when the ſame facts occur to the relators, there never is, or can be, any thing material in the different manner of relating them.

In the Depoſitions of *Canning* and *Hall* the direct contrary appears. For *Hall* has not added one original circumſtance from her own knowledge, to

to what had been before related by *Canning*; by which agreement ſhe throws a glaring ſuſpicion of her evidence being a bare repetition of what ſhe had heard from *Canning*: while, on the other hand, ſhe gives poſitive proofs of her ignorance, by blundering and diſagreement, in the manner of relating thoſe circumſtances of which *Canning* had given her the hint. Particularly as to the time of bringing in the water-jugg.

The doubts ariſing from theſe agreements and diſagreements were very natural and obvious, and certainly required much ſcrutiny. There were accordingly ſome queſtions aſked, which received anſwers more tending to increaſe thoſe doubts than to remove them. Such as, *Did you hear any talk between them* (Wells *and* Squires) *after ſhe* (Canning) *was in the room?* Hall. *They took care I ſhould know but little. In two other anſwers, ſhe ſays, ſhe knew nothing of the man who came along with* Squires's *ſon, and never ſaw him before or after that night.* It is ſomewhat

what uncommon for people to be partners of ſo much deliberate wickedneſs with ſo little knowledge of one another. *Being aſked whether ſhe had ever ſeen the cap and ragged bed gown which* Canning *brought home with her, and ſaid ſhe found in the grate, ſhe anſwered, No, ſhe never did.* Were not theſe all proofs that her knowledge went no farther than what *Canning* had taught her?

Hall had moreover mentioned a very curious circumſtance in her information written by Mr. *Salt*; *that ſhe was the firſt that miſſed* Canning, *which was on the Wedneſday, two nights and a complete day, after ſhe had eſcaped; and this ſhe repeated at the* Old Bailey *in theſe words. I was the firſt that miſſed her, I aſked the gipſy woman once whether the girl was gone, ſhe anſwered, what is that to you, you have no buſineſs with it? but durſt not go to ſee if ſhe was gone. If I had, very like they would have ſerved me ſo.* Yet this heap of abſurdities paſſed without one queſtion to make her explain what ſhe meant by ſaying, *ſhe durſt not*

go to ſee if ſhe was gone, when ſhe knew ſhe was gone; or what elſe it was ſhe meant by *miſſing her*, and in what manner ſhe did *miſs her*.

It is impoſſible, my Lord, for two falſe witneſſes to ſtand a ſeparate examination of ten minutes, if it is done with the leaſt attention; without manifeſting, by their diſagreement, their ignorance of what they pretend to know. Never was ſeparate examination more neceſſary than in this caſe, and yet, ſo far from employing it, thoſe queſtions were not aſked which their actual diſagreement ſeemed to call aloud for. As for inſtance, *It was ſworn, with great prolixity, by* Virtue Hall, *that* Fortune Natus *and his wife had lain conſtantly in the kitchen for eleven weeks before* Canning's *eſcape. In another place ſhe ſwears that on the* 2d *of* January, *at* 4 *in the morning, when* Canning *was brought into the kitchen, where ſhe had her ſtays cut off, there were only herſelf, and the other three women,* Squires, Wells, *and* Wells's *daughter*. Was it not a moſt natural

queſtion

queſtion to have aſked, where *Fortune Natus* and his wife lay that night, ſince it is plain they were neither in the kitchen nor the hay-loft?

One would imagine it was owing to extreme hurry and ſcarcity of time that thoſe queries were neglected. But that does not appear to have been entirely the caſe; for I have counted in the Seſſions paper at leaſt ſix queſtions put to *Canning* and *Hall* that tend abſolutely to nothing. Such as, aſking at each of them, *How they called the place they put* Canning *into*, &c.

Another great inaccuracy to be obſerv'd in this examination, is; when proper and conducive queſtions were put, ſuffering the witneſs to return anſwers not at all relative to them. As, for inſtance, when the court aſked Mr. *Adamſon*, *Did any of the people ſeem unwilling to be inſpected?* He anſwered, *Yes, they were unwilling to be ſtop'd.* And then went on with his former narration. But their being unwilling to be *ſtop'd*, was no more an anſwer

ſwer to the queſtion that was aſk'd, than if he had ſaid, they were unwilling to be hang'd. And yet there the queſtion dropt.

But the moſt inaccurate part of all the examination, and what tended chiefly to miſlead the court, was when the examiners were contented with general and ambiguous anſwers, by which they were made to underſtand much more than the witneſſes meant; who, it is believed, did not mean to deceive them. This is plainly the caſe in the depoſition of *John Wintlebury*, who being aſk'd, *Have you heard the evidence ſhe* (Canning) *has given in court?*

John Wintlebury. *I have: She gave the ſame account, but not ſo fully that night as ſhe did before the ſitting Alderman, on the Wedneſday after; but all agrees with what ſhe ſaid here.*

R. Scarrat likewiſe anſwers to the ſame queſtion. *I alſo heard E. Canning examined before the ſitting Alderman. She gave the ſame account ſhe has done here.*

Theſe two witneſſes ſeemed to ſay ſomething very ſatisfactory to the court; but,

if

if they had been made to explain themſelves, it would have all vaniſhed away. For they, by this general anſwer, meant no more than that what ſhe ſaid before Mr. *Chitty*, the ſitting Alderman, did not contradict her evidence before the jury; but the court certainly underſtood by it, that ſhe had given as full an evidence then, with regard to particulars, as ſhe did at the *Old-Bailey*. This ambiguity, which I dare ſay helped very much to forward the belief of *Canning*'s ſtory, and the Gipſy's condemnation, would have been eaſily removed, by aſking the following queſtions.

Did *Canning*, when before the ſitting Alderman, give any particular deſcription of the room in which ſhe had been confined?

Did ſhe mention any hay being in it?

Did ſhe deſcribe a chimney in the corner?

Did ſhe mention any other furniture beſides the jugg?

Did ſhe mention the ſaddle and the baſon?

Did

Did ſhe mention the tobacco mould, which, being of ſo particular a nature, would have been ſufficient in itſelf to have proved her having been in the room, where it was afterwards found?

Did ſhe deſcribe the ſtairs, as being on the inſide of the door, and the door opening into the kitchen?

Did ſhe ſay, the woman that cut her ſtays took the knife out of the drawer of the dreſſer?

If theſe queſtions had been aſked, there is no reaſon to believe but that they would have been all anſwer'd in the negative, altho' the witneſſes ſeem'd, in their general anſwer, to affirm them all, by miſtaking the intention of the court. It would have then appear'd, that *Canning*, in ſwearing to all theſe particularities, in court, and before the juſtices, had ſworn to what ſhe did not know till the day after ſhe was before the ſitting Alderman; and that, conſequently, her ſtory, if it was not proved falſe, was, at leaſt, proved to have no ſupport from external circum-

 ſtances;

ſtances; and that it reſted barely upon her own oath and that of *Virtue Hall*, the nature of which has been already explained. But the queſtions, as above, not being aſked, the fact was thought to be prov'd, and the poor gipſy condemn'd to death.

The *evidence of fact*, as Mr. *Fielding* very juſtly obſerves, *is alone ſafely to be depended on, as it is alone incapable of a lie.* And yet, it was ſo far from being regarded in this trial, that, tho' it never appear'd ſtronger upon any occaſion than againſt *Canning*, the poor wretch *Squires* would have been long ago hang'd; if that ſentence, which no *evidentia rei* were capable of reſpiting, had not been reſpited by the oath of an acknowledged perjurer: Of ſuch weight is perſonal authority, in oppoſition to reaſon and experience. Such is the credit of oaths, in this land of perjury.

Thus, my Lord, I have run over, in as few words as I could, the principal circumſtances that mark the incredibility of *Canning*'s relation; the various ſteps by

by which it acquir'd credit; and ſome of the moſt obvious omiſſions, which prevented thoſe falſhoods and miſtakes from being detected, at the trial. And, I muſt own, that, altho' I am not at all fond of writing, I was glad that your curioſity furniſhed me with an opportunity of writing upon this ſubject to your Lordſhip, to whom I am bound by many ties of duty and affection. For this is not barely an enquiry concerning a pair of old ſtays, or the bad diet of a ſervant wench; nor about the life of an old gipſy (tho' no man ought to think himſelf too great to intereſt himſelf in the diſtreſſes of the meaneſt) but it is an enquiry of a much more intereſting kind: no leſs than *an enquiry into the nature of moral evidence*; the axis upon which all human affairs turn, and of which the true knowledge is of the greateſt uſe to perſons of all ranks; and is doubly neceſſary to one of your Lordſhip's high ſtation; as you not only require it for the conduct of your own peculiar concerns, but muſt make uſe of it likewiſe in

diſpoſing of the property, and ſometimes of the lives of your fellow ſubjects, as a member of that high court of judicature, in which your noble birth will ſoon entitle you to a ſeat. It is for this reaſon, I have been glad of an opening to communicate to you what my years and experience have furniſhed me with upon this ſubject; and wiſh, that ſome more able pen would undertake the ſame taſk for the publick; which, if I may gueſs by the foregoing tranſaction, ſtands greatly in need of ſome inſtruction.

And indeed, by the free and happy conſtitution of our country, it ſo happens, that the loweſt man in it may be call'd upon, as a jury-man, to decide in matters that immediately concern the lives and goods of his fellow ſubjects; where an ignorance in examining and weighing the evidence brought before him, may be attended with very fatal conſequences to others, and of future uneaſineſs of mind to himſelf; as might have happen'd to the twelve well meaning men who condemn'd

Squires;

Squires; had it not pleaſed God, by unexpected means, to prevent the execution of the ſentence.

In ſhort, my Lord, the *jurymen*, except in thoſe caſes, which come before the court of Chancery, and the houſe of Peers, are the ſole JUDGES of the lives and properties of Engliſhmen. That I may ſhew you this in the ſtrongeſt light, it will not be improper to give you a detail of thoſe perſonages that compoſe an Engliſh court of juſtice; ſuch as they are in FACT, and ſtripp'd of the common *words* in which they are diſguiſed.

There is firſt the PROSECUTOR and CRIMINAL, or, as they are called in caſes of *meum & tuum*, the PLAINTIFF and DEFENDANT. Next there are the ſworn JUDGES of the trial or cauſe, who are called the *jury*, compoſed of diſintereſted men of unblemiſhed characters. All the reſt of the perſonages, though called by various names, are only, *in fact*, different kinds of EVIDENCES.

First there are thoſe who are called in common language the EVIDENCES or WITNESSES; who are ſuppoſed to be diſintereſted, and relate, upon oath, what they know, concerning the relation which the criminal, or defendant, bears to the fact of which he is accuſed.

The ſecond ſort of EVIDENCE go by the name of *council*, who are to inform the aforeſaid JUDGES or *jury-men*, what they know, concerning the relation in which the fact ſtands to the laws of the land. But this ſort of EVIDENCE differs extremely from the firſt, inaſmuch as they do not deliver their evidence upon oath, and ſo far from being diſintereſted, are profeſſedly SUBORNED, or as they term it *fee'd*. Their veracity has therefore no ſort of ſtreſs laid upon it, which gives riſe to

A third ſort of EVIDENCE, commonly called *the judge*, not from any power of deciding, which is lodged ſolely in thoſe twelve JUDGES, whoſe verdict is definitive and uncontroulable; but from his ſitting in the ſame high place where *actual judges*

judges fit in other countries. And is perhaps for this reaſon ſometimes called *the bench*. This ſort of EVIDENCE is like the ſecond, well learned in the law, but differs from them, in having taken an oath to be honeſt, and is, by his ſituation in life, out of ſuſpicion of being ſuborned. His office is, to give true evidence concerning the relation which the laws of the land bear to the crime of which the party is accuſed; and to prevent the FEE'D EVIDENCES from deceiving the twelve JUDGES, by laying falſhoods concerning thoſe laws before them. An Engliſh *judge* may be juſtly conſidered as a living *Corpus juris*, publiſhed by authority, for the uſe of the unlearned; which needs no index, but opens of itſelf, wherever it is neceſſary, and is, upon every occaſion, its own commentary.

I have indeed heard from ſome of the gentlemen of *Weſtminſter-hall*, that jurymen are judges of *fact*, but not of *law*. A diſtinction, ſuch as one often meets

with amongſt the learned, without a difference; ſince there is no queſtion can ariſe concerning law, or concerning any thing elſe that has a real exiſtence, which is not a queſtion concerning matter of fact: ſo that, if it is the office of jurymen to be judges of fact, their office is to judge of every thing which is the proper object of the human underſtanding. This is not only plain to abſtract reaſoners, but is obvious to the common ſenſe of mankind; and is, notwithſtanding the learning of the learned, the actual practice of our courts of juſtice, where jurymen every day give a peremptory deciſion concerning the cauſes that come before them; and acquit or condemn, without thinking themſelves obliged to account for the grounds of their determination.

This being fairly the caſe, it extremely behoveth every man who may be called upon to ſit in judgment, that is every Engliſhman, to make himſelf well acquainted with the nature of evidence; how

to weigh one thing againſt another, and to diſtinguiſh the true from the counterfeit. For my own part, altho' I ſhall always look upon a trial by juries as the great bulwark of our political liberty; yet, in the preſent ſtate of ignorance, credulity, and irregular method of enquiry, I ſhould be extremely fearful of my life and character, if I were accuſed of a capital offence; and ſhould, by no means, think my innocence a ſufficient protection.

It was formerly ordained, for the ſecurity of the accuſed perſon, that there ſhould be the oaths of two credible witneſſes againſt him, before he could be legally condemned. From hence, by a moſt abſurd concluſion, it is preſumed that the oaths of two perſons are a ſufficient proof of the truth of any fact, be it ever ſo unaccountable; ſo that if a man is accuſed of murdering another upon a certain day, and then by way of concealment, eating him up, at a meal, (a fact unca-

pable of proof from any human teſtimo-

ny,

ny, becauſe it will always be more likely that any number of men ſhould be deceived, or have an intention of deceiving, than that ſuch a thing ſhould have really happened) yet if this is ſworn to, by two perſons of unimpeached characters, the jury is bound in conſcience to bring him in guilty; and nothing can ſave him, unleſs, by fair or foul means, he can bring two other perſons from *Plymouth* or *Coventry*, to ſwear an *alibi*, and that they ſmoaked a pipe, or played at whiſt with him upon the Day mentioned.

To prevent this abſurd method of proceeding, and the cruel conſequences attending it, it is incumbent on the learned, who know the rules of probability, to divulge all thoſe rules to the public, and eſpecially to explain more fully, and enforce the principle with which I ſet out in the beginning of this letter, *that no evidence is to be received in proof of any fact, unleſs its weight is ſtrictly conformable to the improbability of the fact it means to prove.*

But

But no perſon who is in the leaſt acquainted with the preſent or paſt times, or has made any obſervations on men and manners, will urge: That it is a very unuſual thing to find human teſtimony falſe, or that it is very improbable it ſhould turn out to be ſo; therefore human teſtimony is never to be urged in ſupport of any fact that is, beyond a certain degree, improbable,

It is the want of having been acquainted with this, which has occaſion'd thoſe, who have reaſon'd in favour of *Canning*, to fall into an error. They have thought it ſufficient, if they could find poſſible means of accounting for ſome one, out of the great number of improbabilities related by her; or of finding evidence, of weight ſufficient to over-balance it. But they have never conſider'd; that when the number of thoſe improbabilities is very great, their accumulation amounts to ſomething ſo near to an impoſſibility, that it may juſtly, in common language, be ſo called.

A man

A man who tells us, that he ſaw twenty aces thrown at one throw, by twenty fair dice, may perhaps, if his character is good, gain credit; but if he tells us, that he ſaw the ſame throw repeated twenty times running, there is no man of ſenſe, who will ſcruple to pronounce, that there was falſhood, either in the dice, or the ſtory teller.

Thus, my Lord, I have run through all, that at preſent occurs to me worth mentioning on this affair; and I dare ſay, have intruded much longer on your patience, than you expected. I can make no other apology for it, but reminding you, that it is always dangerous to ſet an old man a tattling: and, as *George Dandin* ſays, *vous l'avez voulu*; ſo you muſt take the conſequence.

Every thing is now ſettled with regard to my nephew's commiſſion, in which I have received great aſſiſtance from Lord ———, I intend, on *Wedneſday*, to accompany him as far as St. *Albans*, on his

his way to *Holy-Head*, and ſhall next day ſet out for your Lordſhip and my charge, from which I have been too long abſent, and am, with the greateſt reſpect and affection,

My LORD,

Your Lordſhip's, &c.

LONDON, *May* 15, 1753.

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

NATURALIZATION

OF

FOREIGNERS.

THE SECOND EDITION.

Visam Britannos hospitibus feros. HOR.

Νηπιοι οὐδ' ισασιν ὁσῳ πλεον ἡμισυ παντος. HESIOD.

LONDON:
Printed in the Year M DCC LXII.

ESSAY

ON THE

Naturalization of Foreigners.

AMONGST the various productions with which the paſt time has enlightened the preſent, there are none which may be more ſafely relied on than thoſe anonymous pieces which go by the name of Proverbs. We find that nonſenſe of every kind is received with applauſe, when it happens to drop from what is called *a great Name*; and that it is ſometimes, on the ſame account, tranſmitted from age to age, like the toe-nail-parings of St. NICOLAS, with religious veneration and aſtoniſhment. But thoſe proverbial maxims, not being able to tell who was their ſire, and pretending to no rank, but what their own merit procures them, could not poſſibly have ſupported their credit ſo long in the world, if experience, from which they originally ſprung, had not been conſtantly ready to atteſt their veracity. They are the true philoſophy of the vulgar; and are extremely uſeful

in the conduct of private life. In this respect, THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE may be said to be THE VOICE OF GOD; but in no other: for, if ever that saying is meant to recommend the opinions of the vulgar in matters of more general consequence, there are few common sayings so untrue. The business of the bulk of mankind is not to think, but to act, each in his own little sphere, and for his own little purposes; and this he may do, very completely, without much reflection, by the force of habit alone: leaving the conduct of the whole to the few of a more extended way of thinking; or to the great Conductor of the universe, according to that more than vulgar proverb, EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF, AND GOD FOR US ALL.

A HABERDASHER of small ware, for instance, if he happens to be but one degree above an idiot, knows, by the help of those maxims, how to manage his own peculiar business to the encrease of his stock, and the security of his family, better than if he were directed by the best philosopher of them all. He knows that he is to buy cheap and to sell dear, and, for that purpose, to keep the trade in as few hands as possible, and to burn, sink, and destroy all those who take upon them to haberdash, without being *free of the company*; knowing, that though THE MORE THE MERRIER, yet, THE FEWER THE BETTER CHEAR. He likewise knows, that A PENNY SAV'D IS A PENNY GOT,

got, and consequently, that in his family, there is need of certain *sumptuary laws*, to prevent himself from going too often to the Punch-house, or Sadler's-Wells; and his wife from wearing more silk gowns than the nature of gossipping absolutely requires. To preserve the grandeur and dignity of his family he says, BETTER AN EMPTY HOUSE THAN A BAD TENANT; and from thence concludes, that it is better his daughters should go virgins into the other world,

With all their imperfections on their heads,

than that they should slip away to May-fair-Chapel with foot soldiers, or hackney-coachmen, and bring forth a numerous progeny to light lamps, or cry mackarel about the streets.

Certainly nothing can be more just than these maxims; and a steady adherence to them must, in time, procure him his desired ten thousand; make him a very respectable man in his ward, perhaps an alderman; and Miss BIDDY and Miss SUKEY, besides living in ease and affluence, may come, at the age of fifty, to be look'd upon as *very genteel sort of girls*, and to be visited by Sir HUMPHREY GUTTLE's lady, and the best ladies in the lane.

But when my haberdashing friend has brought his wisdom so far, there let him stop. Let him not, in the pride of his success, fancy he has *a head*, and that he could make the state richer, happier, and more respectable, by the same

means which he has employed to raiſe his own family: for the moment he applies his maxims to any thing out of the walls of his own houſe and ſhop, that moment he launches out into the boundleſs ocean of abſurdity. A ſtate, and a ſingle family in that ſtate, do not differ in magnitude only, as is generally imagined, but are very different in their nature, and muſt be ſometimes conducted and improved by means (in all appearance, at leaſt) directly oppoſite. This general propoſition, and the bad conſequences which have reſulted to the public for want of a due attention to it, may, perhaps, be the ſubject of our future enquiry. At preſent I ſhall only take notice of one particular vulgarity, a conſequence of one of the foregoing maxims, which has always prevailed, more or leſs, in this Iſland; tho', I think, of late, with more than ordinary noiſe: and that is, the complaint that foreigners are employed in England, in great numbers, to the prejudice of the natives. This complaint is not entirely confined to the waiſtcoated populace, tho' it, no doubt, began there; but has aſcended from them to others who wear coats, nay, laced waiſtcoats; from theſe to hackney writers, whoſe ſentiments have been ſometimes drivel'd out in ſenatorial ſpeeches.

An attempt, indeed, has been made to diſcountenance this narrow and injudiciouſly ſelfiſh ſpirit, by bringing in a bill giving the rights of British ſubjects to all thoſe, wherever they may hap-

happen to be born, who are willing to make a part of our happy conſtitution in church and ſtate. *But it pleaſed not the million*, and was thrown out, for reaſons which would be very entertaining, if they could be all collected and compared together. "What," ſays a fox-hunting 'ſquire, "would you let in an inundation of beggars upon us, without art or induſtry, to become an additional burden to the poor's-rate, already too heavy for our ſhoulders?" "There ſpoke the tongue of an angel," ſays his taylor: "Good, your honour, ſtand by Old England, and don't encourage any more of thoſe vagabonds to come over; for we have but too many of them already to take the bread out of our mouths." How is it poſſible to reconcile theſe two opinions concerning foreigners, ſo oppoſite, and yet ſo common in the mouths of thoſe who are willing to exclude them? One repreſents them as ſo many idle drones, that fatten upon the labours of the reſt: the other, as ſo intolerably buſy as not to ſuffer any body to be employed but themſelves.

If experience may be allowed to decide in this matter, the taylor's reaſon will alone be found to have even the appearance of foundation; and hence ariſe moſt of the complaints of the vulgar. It is certainly true that foreigners are apt to take the bread out of ſome mouths. But out of whoſe mouths? The mouths of the proud, the idle, the ignorant, and the debauched. And are

we, for the clamours of ſuch, to deprive the nation of the great advantage which muſt accrue to it, from the acceſſion of ſo many ſkilful and induſtrious hands, which the hopes of living better than in their own countries, daily brings over to us? Neither are thoſe complaints, mean as they are, in general, well founded. For thoſe very grumblers owe part of the little bread they enjoy, to the general wealth, which the induſtry of foreigners has brought into their country. I ſhould be glad to know what ſort of a figure this iſland would make, if it were to refund to the continent all thoſe whoſe names ſhew them to be of foreign extraction. Let it refund their own to the Saxons, Danes, Normans, French and Germans, and, I believe, there are few of the reſt who would chooſe to remain in it. They all, however, join in the common cry againſt new comers; and yet, it is certain, that the anceſtors of one half of them were once ſtrangers; and there is as little doubt that the poſterity of thoſe, who are now ſtrangers, will, in a very ſhort time, call themſelves Engliſhmen; and may perhaps, like the reſt, fling dirt at their forefathers, by ſhutting the door, in an opprobrious manner, upon others who have an equal title to be admitted. He is an Engliſhman, and he alone, who contributes to enrich and defend England; and he who does not,

not, is an Alien, if he merit not a worſe appellation. The time may come,

Εσσεται ἠμαρ ὁτ' αν ποτ' ολωλη Ιλιος ιρη,
Και Πριαμος, και λαος ἐϋμμελιω Πριαμοιο,

the time may come, when the tide of proſperity may ebb, which ſtill flows into this happy iſland, and may not only carry back many of the foreigners it now brings, but many of the natives along with them. Would they who grumble at the encouragement now given to foreigners in England, be glad to hear that Engliſhmen are better fed abroad than at home, and that half the ſhops in Paris were occupied by them? They would, undoubtedly, grieve at the news inſtead of rejoicing, which they ought naturally to do if their preſent complaints had any thing rational in their foundation.

In the year 1744, this excluſive, this perſecuting, this corporation ſpirit ſeized with great violence upon the Engliſh footmen, and gave a beginning to a ſort of *bellum ſervile*, in the very heart of this great metropolis. A ſelect committee of thoſe gentlemen advertiſed a rendezvous in the news papers, to be held at *Hickford*'s great room, *in order to concert ways and means to oblige their maſters to turn away all their foreign ſervants*. But this combination, ſo abominable, if it could have been at all ſupported, became next day extremely ridiculous, by the vigilance and courage of Juſtice DE VEIL; who,

for the virtues, civil and military, which he exerted upon this occaſion, received, from his majeſty's hand, the honour of knighthood.

But, altho' this gallant and uſeful ſervice was *pleaſing to the ſuperior powers, the cauſe of the vanquiſhed did not ceaſe to be dear to many* CATO's, male and female, who thought that no demand could be more reaſonable than for Britiſh-born ſubjects to enjoy a monopoly of vails and lazineſs, by which their vails and lazineſs would come to be greatly encreaſed; and thereby that proper equality be preſerved betwixt maſter and ſervant, ſo eſſential to the freedom and independency of the Britiſh conſtitution.

To ſhew how ill theſe good people reaſon in what relates to the general intereſt of their country, let us ſuppoſe a practice eſtabliſhed the very reverſe of what they approve, and, that the faſhion of keeping foreign ſervants were carried ſo high as totally to exclude the natives from wearing liveries. It is demonſtrable that ſuch a faſhion, however fooliſh in its motives, would be attended with the greateſt advantages to Britain. For, firſt, we ſhould have much leſs chance of cabals and combinations from men, who, being brought from all corners of Europe, and incapable of combining under any title but the moſt odious and unpopular, could have no proſpect of relief from a corporation-fund, after a forfeiture of their ſervices and characters. Secondly, we ſhould be much better ſerved by

thoſe

thoſe who had received the early habits of ſubmiſſion, in countries where ſubordination is better eſtabliſhed, than by thoſe who think they *degrade and debaſe the Briton*, if they condeſcend to do above one third of the work for which they are paid.

Theſe, indeed, are only private conſiderations, whoſe truth cannot be abſolutely aſcertained without a greater number of experiments than any body will ever take the pains of collecting. But tho' the advantage or diſadvantage to private families, ariſing from ſuch a faſhion, ſhould be ſtill a ſubject of diſpute, the advantage, with regard to the public, will bear no controverſy.

For the high wages and vails would draw young men enough from all quarters of the world, to fill ever ſo many liveries; and, when one race of thoſe men extinguiſhed, the laws, which faſhion and conveniency have eſtabliſhed, requiring celibacy from footmen almoſt as much as from dominicans, they would be recruited freſh and freſh every day by new comers from abroad. Let thoſe who *talk* of their country, for once *think* what benefits would ariſe to it from ſuch an extraneous aid. Let them think how many thouſands of able-bodied young men would be preſerved to the farms and manufacturing towns, who now come in ſhoals to London, upon the proſpect of living there in a luxurious and lazy manner. Let them think how

many

many would be ſpared to encreaſe the national riches by commerce, and the national glory by arms, who now, for want of worſe hands, loiter away their youth in the halls and kitchens of the rich. Theſe patriots ſurely are not afraid that the price of labour will become ſo low to the farmer, that he will be enabled to pay too much rent, and export too much corn to foreign markets. They cannot be afraid that the price of labour will become ſo low to the manufacturer, that he will be enabled to export his broad cloth too cheap to Turkey, and by that means ſupplant the French, who have almoſt entirely deprived us of that branch of commerce. But if theſe are not their fears, it is hard to ſay what they are afraid of, ſince theſe are two of the moſt obvious conſequences attending the reception of foreign ſervants. I know there are ſome who pretend that there is danger of the foreigners, ſettled amongſt us, joining in any hoſtile Invaſion to conquer or diſtreſs this iſland. But this fear, real or pretended, is ill ſupported by any kind of reaſoning, and leaſt of all by experience; which, in all our inteſtine commotions, kept theſe foreigners ever free from any ſuſpicion of treaſon; and has diſcovered an uncommon zeal for the defence of the government in ſuch of them as are proteſtants, for whom alone any public encouragement was intended.

And what, after all, is this *public encouragement*, which was propoſed by a general bill of

naturalization? Nothing but the removal of the *public diſcouragements*, which the ignorance of former times had, by expreſs laws, laid upon foreigners, to this nation's detriment as well as theirs. It was only meant to permit them to come over, ready trained, to do our work, to man our fleets, to pay our taxes, and to maintain our poor. "No," ſays a leading man in the veſtry, "that is not all; they will expect "likewiſe to be maintained in their turn, when-"ever any of them happens to be unfitted for "labour, by ſickneſs or old age." This is a very common objection, and, perhaps, we may find it full of ſenſe and equity; eſpecially, when we conſider that the pariſh could not be ſuppoſed to have the pleaſure of feeding, cloathing, and teaching them in their infancy.

To be ſerious, there is no danger of any infirm people leaving their native countries, upon the hopes of getting a ſhare of the pitiful pittance, which is left by the pariſh officers, for the maintenance of the public poor. Thoſe who are found to leave their native countries, in order to ſeek their fortunes in diſtant climates, are not the old, the maimed, the ſick, and the diſtreſt; but the young, the healthy, the vigorous and the vain; thoſe who have, or fancy they have, talents, which will give them a ſuperiority over the inhabitants of thoſe countries to which they chuſe to migrate. The natives of every country have great advantages in buſineſs;

buſineſs over ſtrangers, ariſing from that circumſtance alone of their nativity. It is a great point in buſineſs to ſet out with the knowledge of the language and cuſtoms of the country, to enjoy the aſſiſtance of relations and ſchool-fellows; and to have cuſtomers tranſmitted by habit from maſter to apprentice; in all which reſpects the diſadvantages of foreigners can only be compenſated by ſuperior ſkill and induſtry.

But, ſay their oppoſers, were the foreigners to recommend themſelves only by their ſuperior ſkill and induſtry, we ſhould not dare to complain; but they make themſelves acceptable to the rich and the giddy, by oddities and artifices, altogether unconnected with their callings. For inſtance, ſay they, we ſhall have an artiſt, who, though inferior in talents to ſeveral of our own countrymen, ſhall carry away the vogue from them all, by wearing a long beard, and looking like a Turk, when there are twenty perſons ready to make oath, that he is neither better nor worſe than a chriſtian. And is this a cauſe of complaint? One would think that Engliſhmen had no beards, or that there was a law here, as in Ruſſia, to prohibit the growth of them. The gentleman does not, as I have been informed, pretend to any excluſive patent for theſe his accoutrements; and if he has diſcovered, that by ſubmitting to eat his bread with the ſweat of his muſtachio's, he ſhall earn better bread than would otherwiſe come to his ſhare, it would be foolifhly

foolifhly difputing *Taftes*, to find fault with the proceeding.

In fhort, be that as it will, it ought to have no place in a queftion betwixt Englifh and Foreigners. Quackery and affectation are the growth of every climate; and of our own dear country as much, at leaft, as of any other under the fun. Long before this hairy phænomenon landed at Dover, that force of Englifh genius, which laid open to Sir ISAAC NEWTON the laws of attraction, had difcovered to the famous TIDDIDOL that there was a virtue in particles of filver-lace, artfully difpofed upon an old hat and coat, that would greatly accelerate the circulation of gingerbread. The effects of this talifmanic contrivance are well known; the cauſe and manner of its operation are not fo obvious. All we know is, that it acts upon thofe who come within its vortex; but in what ratio, whether according to the cube, or the fquare of the diftance, is yet undetermined by philofophers. For my own part, being totally ignorant of geometry, and at the fame time not fuperftitious enough to believe, that there is any fympathy fubfifting betwixt the filver upon TIDDIDOL's hat, and the copper in the pockets of his *cuftomers*; *I am inclined to think, that it affects* their underftandings only, and that the proceſs is entirely of a logical nature. The aftonifhed people fee, that thofe bits of filver-lace, make TIDDIDOL an extraordinary fine gingerbread baker;

baker; and then conclude that an extraordinary fine gingerbread baker muſt bake extraordinary fine gingerbread. I am not ſure, that this is extraordinary ſound reaſoning, but I am ſure, from many years obſervation, that it is as concluſive in favour of artiſts, born upon the banks of the Thames, as of thoſe who come from the Rhone or the Tiber.

Before I take leave of this ſubject, it may not be amiſs to make a remark or two upon the word *Alien*, when applied to perſons reſident in England. He is, it ſeems, an alien, and by law ſubject to various diſcouragements, *who is born of foreign parents, in a foreign country*. A law-deſcription altogether arbitrary, and no better grounded on the real nature of citizenſhip, than if it declared thoſe to be aliens, who were born with ſuch coloured eyes, or in ſuch a ſeaſon. One way to be ſenſible of this, is to examine the two diſqualifications ſeparately, and to aſk: Is it being born in a diſtant country which unfits a man from being a freeman of England? No; for the ſons of Engliſhmen born abroad are all Engliſh. Is it then being born of foreign parents? No; for the ſons of foreigners, if born in England, are acknowledged to be Engliſh. It is inconceivable, why neither of thoſe circumſtances of birth, taken ſingly, ſhould tend to diſqualify the perſon ſo born, and yet, that by a ſtrange ſort of arithmetic,

metic, the addition of thoſe two nothings, ſhould produce a ſomething ſo diſadvantageous.

In whatever light we view this diſtinction, I am confident it will be found to owe its derivation entirely to the municipal laws of this iſland; and, conſequently, a repeal of thoſe laws, by a general act of Naturalization, would entirely remove it; and then every man, reſiding in England, would be an Engliſhman to all intents and purpoſes. So that to oppoſe ſuch an act, is, in other words, to aſſent to laws, by which many thouſands of Engliſhmen are excluded from this country, and from partaking of benefits, which, by the bare participation, they would proportionably encreaſe, and be equally entitled to with the reſt. To talk of a foreigner, naturalized by reſidence, as a foreigner, is as great an abuſe of language, as to talk of melted ice, as ice. For as the latter becomes water by melting, loſing all the properties of ice; ſo the other becomes an Engliſhman, ipſo facto, by the incorporation: and any reaſonings, drawn from his former ſtate, can only ſerve to miſlead the ſhallow and unthinking.

Let us therefore lay aſide all ſuch unnatural diſtinctions, that divert our attention from thoſe, which it is ever deſtructive to overlook. Let us be careful to diſtinguiſh honeſt men from knaves, labourers from drones, and ingenious men from coxcombs: Let us puniſh crimes, ſtarve lazineſs, and ridicule falſe pretence, whether the culprit be Trojan or Tyrian: But let

us

us not ſacrifice uſeful realities to unmeaning words; nor ſubmit the learning and experience of the preſent age, to the narrow-hearted whims of our ignorant and ſavage progenitors.

A

DIALOGUE

ON

TASTE.

Ουδεν ευ ανθροποισι διακριδον εστι νοημα,
Αλλ' ὁ συ θαυμαζοις τουθ' ετεροισι γελως. LUCIAN.

Mille hominum ſpecies, et rerum diſcolor uſus:
Velle ſuum cuique eſt, nec voto vivitur uno. PERSIUS.

THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
Printed in the Year MDCCLXII.

A

DIALOGUE

ON

TASTE.

LORD MODISH's Country-Seat.

LORD and LADY MODISH, LADY HARRIOT, and COLONEL FREEMAN.

LORD MODISH.

AND ſo you prefer HUDIBRAS to VIRGIL?

COL. FREEMAN.

I do indeed, my Lord.

LORD MODISH.

But why, my noble Colonel?

COL. FREEMAN.

Becauſe he gives me moſt pleaſure.

LORD MODISH.

Then allow me to tell you, George, you are with all your reading an abſolute Goth, and have no manner of taſte.

COL. FREEMAN.

So you told me laſt night, my Lord, when I preferred Canary to Champaign.

LORD MODISH.

No doubt; for that was juſt ſuch another inſtance of your Gothicneſs.

COL. FREEMAN.

I agree with your Lordſhip that the caſes are very parallel, and for that reaſon I mention your laſt night's obſervation. The word *taſte* originally belongs to the palate, and it is not amiſs to have that always in view, when we ſuſpect a miſapplication of it in the way of metaphor. It is by taſte, no doubt, that we are able to diſtinguiſh ſalt from ſugar, and muſtard from apple-pie; its proper office being upon all ſuch occaſions to inform us what is what. But allow me to aſk your Lordſhip, why you ſaid I had no taſte in wine, when it was plain, by my preference of one of the bottles, that I could very well diſtinguiſh it from the reſt.

LORD

LORD MODISH.

You certainly now affect to misunderstand me. By saying you had no taste, I did not mean that you was not capable of distinguishing; but, according to the usual application of the phrase, that you had a bad taste, and preferred the worst.

COL. FREEMAN.

This is, my Lord, an application of the word *taste*, that, however usual, somewhat deviates from its original and proper sense. For, according to that, good taste can signify no more than a greater than ordinary accuracy in determining, in certain cases, that two distinct things are of the same or of different kinds, and when of different kinds in assigning the proper name to each. Take a man so endowed into your cellar, and without seeing the labels, he will tell you not only that this hogshead is Port and that Claret, but amongst the Clarets that this is of such a growth and such a year, that of such another. I am very sensible that your Lordship's application of the phrase is nevertheless usual: but if all the phrases that convey no distinct and invariable meaning were banished out of the world, we should be deprived, among the rest, of a great many that are very usual and fashionable. But, *a propos* of our last night's liquor, did you mean by the worst the least

wholeſome? If ſo, I am afraid my taſte can hardly be defended.

LORD MODISH.

No, faith; I believe the Champaign is the worſt of the two in that reſpect. No; I meant that which had the worſt flavour.

COL. FREEMAN.

Then I ſuppoſe you think me inſincere in my declaration of liking Canary.

LORD MODISH.

I have known you too long, George, to lay inſincerity to your charge. No; I make no doubt of your having really a very bad taſte in your potations.

COL. FREEMAN.

You mean, then, I dare ſay, that it is not your taſte.

LORD MODISH.

No; nor of any of your acquaintance, I'll be ſworn.

COL. FREEMAN.

So then the goodneſs or badneſs of one's taſte is to be determined by the taſte of the majority.

LORD MODISH.

Certainly; and were it otherwiſe what confuſion muſt enſue? for when men are to drink jovially together, it is highly reaſonable that the few

few ſhould yield in the choice of the liquor to the many.

COL. FREEMAN.

My Lord, I will allow your conſequence: But what neceſſity is there for this ſociety in drink, by which the conformity becomes neceſſary? When ſoldiers are to attack the enemy, ſuch an union muſt be abſolutely neceſſary; elſe one platoon might retire whilſt another advanced. It is no leſs neceſſary where more pacific people are met to dance country-dances; elſe the man might be footing corners, whilſt his partner was figuring in. Unleſs all fight and dance with one accord, the purpoſes of fighting and dancing would be entirely fruſtrated. But there is nothing in the nature of drinking, that hinders it from being performed as effectually, and to as good purpoſe, by a ſingle perſon, as by one that has thirty legions at his back. When you can make it appear that a man ought to take phyſic becauſe his friend his ſick, or to drink becauſe he is dry, it may then appear reaſonable in him to drink of a particular kind of liquor becauſe his companions happen to be pleaſed with the flavour of it: an extraordinary ſtretch of complaiſance, from which no perſon ſeems to reap any advantage. For my own part, I profeſs myſelf an entire friend to toleration and liberty of conſcience, and think it little better than popery and the inquiſition to compel any man to ſwallow what

goes againſt his ſtomach, on pretence of preſerving unity in public drinking.

LORD MODISH.

Thou art an odd fellow, George, that is certain.

COL. FREEMAN.

I am indeed, my Lord; for I always deliver my own ſentiments, and in my own words.

LORD MODISH.

So then you reckon religion and drinking to be of the ſame nature. I think I have known you ſometimes more lucky in your compariſons.

COL. FREEMAN.

I don't pretend, my Lord, that the parallel will hold in every reſpect; but with regard to the ſubject of our preſent converſation they are certainly very much akin: being both matters of private concern and advantage only; and, of courſe, the objects only of taſte or private opinion. But when I ſpeak of religion, I would be underſtood of what is ſpeculative and ritual, and not at all of the moral duties: So when I ſpeak of drinking, I mean drinking for pleaſure, without taking any of its medicinal effects into conſideration; for as by theſe ſociety may be affected, they are very properly the objects of general concern and enquiry.

LORD MODISH.

Then you don't allow the moral duties to be the objects of taste. My Lord Shaftesbury is of a very different opinion.

COL. FREEMAN.

That may be; but his Lordship stands not for divine authority with me. I know, my Lord, that there has been much unfortunate pains employed, by many authors from Plato down to Sir Harry Beaumont, in order to confound the objects of judgment with those of taste and feeling; than which nothing can be more vulgar and unphilosophical.

LORD MODISH.

I fancy it is not an easy matter to separate them; and, as I know you have turned your mind pretty much to such enquiries, I should be glad to know what touchstone you recommend for that purpose.

COL. FREEMAN.

It does not appear to me so difficult as it seems to those refined philosophers; and thus I distinguish them. Whatever has a rule or standard to which it may be referred, and is capable of comparison, is not the object of taste, but of reason and judgment. On the other hand, the proper objects of taste, or feeling, are such as are relative to the person only who is actuated by them, who is the sole judge whether those feelings be agreeable, or otherwise; and being

being informed of this ſimple fact from himſelf, no farther conſequence can be drawn from it, neither does it admit of any diſpute. Thus when a man tells me that veniſon eats better with currant than with gravy ſauce, he only informs me of his private opinion concerning it. It admits of no reaſoning, pro or con. There it muſt reſt, and he muſt have the like patience to hear me, in my turn, declare that gravy ſauce is far before currant; and this without making any reply, if he has a grain of ſenſe. It is quite otherwiſe when either he or I aſſert that Weſtminſter hall is longer than Weſtminſter bridge, or that oak is ſpecifically heavier than copper; for in each of thoſe caſes there is a ſtandard to apply, to wit, a foot rule in one caſe, and a pair of ſcales in the other, which entirely exclude opinion from having any ſhare in the debate. With regard to one thing's being comparatively better than another, there is likewiſe a ſtandard of another kind, which leaves the preference to be decided by the judgment; and that is the relation which ſuch things bear to the uſe for which they are both ſuppoſed to be intended. As for inſtance, if it ſhould become the ſubject of enquiry which of two ſwords is the beſt, the intention of fighting being ſuppoſed, the preference will be reaſonably given to that, which, by its ſuperior ſtrength, lightneſs, ſharpneſs, and perhaps length, is the fitteſt for fight. If, for the ſame purpoſe, the compariſon happens between a ſword and a pair of ſciſſars, the pre-

preference will, no doubt, fall to the ſword for very obvious reaſons. But vary the circumſtances of the intended combat, and explain that it is not to be fought in a field, but in a poſt chaiſe or a centry box, and you will be obliged to rejudge the cauſe by a new ſtandard, which will infallibly declare a pair of ſciſſars to be a more fatal, and conſequently a better, weapon than any Toledo in the world. It is poſſible, by thus ſuppoſing certain circumſtances, to bring the moſt different and moſt remote objects in nature to be compared by a common ſtandard; but where this is not provided, reaſon muſt be pleaſed to leave the bench, and refer the matter entirely to taſte, or private inclination. It is that alone which can determine a young Lady in her choice between pink and blue, or perhaps between her Dancing-maſter, and the Sheriff of the County; and from ſuch a ſentence there lies no appeal. Having thus, as I think, fairly ſtated the different pretenſions of judgment and taſte, I will leave it to your Lordſhip to pronounce whether they are ſo like one another as to be eaſily miſtaken.

LORD MODISH.

In the way you have ſtated the affair there can be no difficulty, and the maxim, that *there is no diſputing of taſtes*, is one of thoſe that are the moſt univerſally received.

COL. FREEMAN.

The maxim is, as you ſay, my Lord, in every body's mouth, but there are very few whoſe under-

underſtandings are at all the better for it. I have, you know, in the courſe of my life, mixed in a great variety of ſcenes, civil and military, and have made one in all ſorts of companies, from her Grace's drawing-room to a Graveſend tilt-boat, but have ever found, at leaſt, three fourths of the converſations, high and low, to be employed in each perſon's declaring his own taſte, and decrying that of his companions: a method of ſpending time which appeared to me ſo unintereſting, ſo unentertaining, and ſo unprofitable, that it has contributed more than any thing elſe to the ſolitary and bookiſh life that I have led for ſome years paſt. Not but that I find, every now and then, ſome of my calf-ſkin companions, who are guilty of the ſame egotiſms, impertinently endeavouring to palm upon me their own opinions and thoſe of their maſters, inſtead of argument and matter of fact; but then I can more eaſily get rid of their company. I was laſt Sunday drinking tea at Lady Faddleton's, where unfortunately Miſs Molly Bright happened to be mentioned as a beauty, and produced a diſpute of an hour and a half, that made me ſorry the holineſs of the day did not ſuffer me to propoſe whiſt; for I think a total ſilence not ſo bad as ſo perverſe an abuſe of ſpeech.

LADY HARRIOT.

And pray, Colonel, don't you think Miſs Molly Bright handſome?

COL.

COL. FREEMAN.

Suppoſe, Madam, I ſhould ſay yes; what would your Ladyſhip infer from my anſwer? Nothing more, I preſume, than that ſhe was handſome in my eyes. Were you deſirous of knowing what ſhe appeared in my Lord's, I fancy you would be under a neceſſity of putting the ſame queſtion to him, juſt as if it had never been put to me.

LADY HARRIOT.

Then you think it is all fancy, and that there is nothing real in beauty.

COL. FREEMAN.

I have, Madam, too much reaſon to believe that there is ſomething real in its effects, if you will accept of that as an anſwer.

LADY HARRIOT.

I am not philoſopher enough to know whether it be an anſwer or not. But ſure, Colonel, you muſt own there are ſome women whom all the world allows to be handſome.

COL. FREEMAN.

Your Ladyſhip ſeems to be more a philoſopher than you are willing to acknowledge. You are endeavouring, I find, to withdraw female beauty from amongſt the number of thoſe things which are merely the objects of taſte, by

an appeal to a matter of fact, the general ſentiments of mankind. But, ſuppoſing the fact to be concluſive, I do not underſtand how it can be ſo aſcertained as to become a ſafe foundation for any ſuperſtructure of reaſoning.

LADY MODISH.

Perhaps, Colonel, you do not allow there is ſuch a thing neither as uglineſs. Could you prove that point, there are ſome Ladies whom the whole town would think vaſtly beholden to you.

COL. FREEMAN.

The caſe of deformity is ſomewhat different, Madam, from that of beauty. Deformity may be ſubject to enquiry, and reducible to certain principles, altho' beauty ſhould not. A face which has one eye larger than the other, which has the mouth awry, or one cheek fat and the other lean, is certainly deformed, and in this all men will agree. But it does not follow that the reverſe of theſe will produce beauty. As to the agreement which Lady Harriot has obſerved with regard to the beauty of certain females, I believe it will not be difficult to account for it without allowing it to be real. As for inſtance, let us ſuppoſe that two or three of thoſe worthies, who are by fate appointed to ſet faſhions in our great city, ſhould from amongſt five thouſand young women, equally free of deformity, pick out Miſs Thingum, at random, and toaſt her upon all occa-

occaſions for a burning beauty. What will be the conſequence? Thoſe who are an inch below them in faſhionability, if you will allow me the word, will catch the ſound, and convey it like the watch-word of a camp from the Generaliſſimo to the centinel. The machine being once ſet in motion, there is nothing to obſtruct its progreſs. The men of ſenſe never tire other people with declaring their own taſtes, and are equally unwilling to loſe their time in diſputing the taſtes of others. Amongſt the fools there is here and there one to be found, who will engage in the wiſe controverſy, and will ſay, *Indeed I don't ſee any thing ſo ſuperlatively handſome in Miſs Thingum, that there ſhould be all this rout made about her*; but the greateſt part of them are ſuch poltroons as to be afraid of oppoſing the prevailing cry for fear of ſhewing their ignorance, always ſuppoſing beauty to be a ſcience which it is incumbent upon every gentleman to underſtand. This I am ſure of, that there is nothing more common, both for fools and men of ſenſe, than when their toaſt is demanded, to give a faſhionable beauty whom they never ſaw. As to the Ladies, tho' none of them can be ſuppoſed much ſmitten with Miſs Thingum, yet they are all unanimous in allowing her to be handſome, and this from a very obvious motive. They all know that any heſitation from them would be aſcribed to envy, which, as it would both leſſen themſelves,

ſelves, and add to the triumph of their rival, they are at a great deal of pains to hide; and all the while that they look upon her ſway as uſurpation, they, for their own ſakes, aſſert her divine right. Mankind upon many ſuch occaſions become their own dupes, and fall proſtrate before the idols which themſelves have ſet up; but hiſtory, Lady Harriot, and the inveſtigation of facts will always enable us to ſet the true ſtamp upon ſuch ſublime pretenſions. Whatever is natural is of divine origin, and the firſt ſource of it will be for ever hid from our vain curioſity; but all ſham claims to divinity are eaſily expoſed, whenever the proper means are employed. Would you, for inſtance, be certified whether any particular race of Kings are by divine appointment, you need only trace their ſteps, and it is ten to one but you find the firſt of them at the head of a gang of rebels, murderers, and banditti. The ſame method of enquiry will ſet us right, as to the unbounded empire which town-toaſts pretend to exerciſe over our hearts. A very little tracing will convince us, that altho' they are women by the eternal appointment of the Almighty, they owe their being, as univerſal beauties, to a very few men, and thoſe perhaps neither the wiſeſt nor the ſobereſt of their ſpecies. At leaſt we may in this manner account for the apparent univerſality of ſentiment concerning them, to a degree that will render it

it too doubtful for any concluſion to be drawn from it.

LORD MODISH.

My dear Colonel, your hiſtory of Miſs Thingum, as you call her, is very plauſible; but you have not given us the proof of any of thoſe facts by which you pretend to trace the progreſs of her glory. You ſeem here, I think, to give more indulgence to your own gueſſes than you are commonly willing to allow to thoſe of other people.

COL. FREEMAN.

Your objection, my Lord, is very juſt; and as I knew not how to ſtrip thoſe general facts of the appearance of gueſſes, I was not very poſitive in my inferences from them. My notion, however, of that matter is formed from real obſervations, ſtrong enough from their number to convince myſelf; tho' ſingly too inconſiderable, to be of weight in a queſtion of ſo general a nature, or to be urged as proof to your Lordſhip: unleſs your experience happen to coincide with mine; which I am apt to believe is in ſome meaſure the caſe, by your allowing my account to be plauſible. But I have an argument much more clearly founded againſt the agreement of mankind, with regard to the beauty of any particular female; which is, that ſuch an univerſality of ſentiments would ſtand in contradiction to all the

hitherto known principles of nature: for it would have been given in vain, if not for very deſtructive purpoſes. For what could be ſuppoſed more ridiculous, and even fatal, than for all the inhabitants of London and Weſtminſter to be real, inſtead of pretended, admirers of one woman? Happily for the world, their practice, which is much more to be depended on than their words, ſhews us that this is far from being the caſe; and that each of them has his fair, for whom he ſighs in private, and whoſe name he thinks too ſacred to be mingled with the ribaldry and midnight debauch of a tavern.

LADY HARRIOT.

That may be very true, Colonel; but may not a man think a woman beautiful without being in love with her? and on the contrary, may he not be in love with one whom he does not think beautiful? There is a thing they call the agreeable, which has often more powerful effects than mere beauty.

LORD MODISH.

Harriot is certainly in the right there, George; I believe there is no body but has, ſome time or other, felt that diſtinction.

COL. FREEMAN.

My Lord, I have often heard the diſtinction; but I am apt to ſuſpect that it conſiſts only

only in the oppoſition of real ſentiment to miſtaken knowledge; or rather, of a word with a meaning to one that has little or none.

LORD MODISH.

I ſhould be glad to have that explained.

COL. FREEMAN.

Indeed, my Lord, the diſtinction betwixt beautiful and agreeable, when applied to faces, is barely verbal, and will vaniſh, together with all the difficulties attending this ſubject, immediately upon a preciſe definition of thoſe words. We have only to aſk ourſelves, what *is beauty?* The philoſophical anſwer, is, *That form which pleaſes.* Let us next aſk, what is meant by an agreeable form; the anſwer is certainly, *That which pleaſes.* So that to determine which of the two, the beautiful or the agreeable woman, when put in oppoſition, is the genuine beauty, we need only examine the actual effects of both; and if it appears that love and deſire are attendant upon agreeable women no leſs than upon beauties, as both your Lordſhip and Lady Harriot ſeem to allow, it will follow that the agreeable woman is really beautiful in the eyes of that man to whom ſhe is agreeable, any reaſoning or faſhion to the contrary notwithſtanding.

LORD MODISH.

Suppoſing your notion of the agreeable to be juſt, I ſhould be glad to know what is then meant by beauty in oppoſition to what pleaſes only. You know it is a word in every body's mouth, and you cannot imagine they mean nothing at all by it. If I were inclined to doubt them, my own ſentiments would convince me of their ſincerity. Is there no ſuch thing as regular features, which may ſatisfy the judgment, without touching the heart?

COL. FREEMAN.

I have many reaſons, my Lord, to believe there is not; but, without having recourſe to any, the diſcourſe of thoſe who value themſelves the moſt upon their connoiſſeurſhip in beauty, is ſufficient to convince us that they talk with as little reflection as feeling upon the ſubject. Aſk one of them what he means by *regular* features; he will firſt be ſurpriſed at your ignorance; and if you perſiſt in your enquiry, will tell you, *features that are in due proportion*; aſk what he means by due proportion, and he will perhaps tell you, after much ſtammering, *that Lady ſomebody's features are in due proportion*; aſk why he thinks her features in due proportion, he will tell you, *becauſe they are regular*; and if you carry on your queſtions to all eternity, the anſwers will ſtill trot in the ſame

ſame circle they ſet out in; and tho' very far from making us more knowing than we were, are perhaps the beſt anſwers that the ſubject affords. The folly lies in anſwering at all to ſuch queſtions——You ſeem in deep contemplation, my Lord.

LORD MODISH.

Faith, George, I was firſt rummaging my brain to ſee whether I could not find there ſome rules by which features might be adjuſted; but to no purpoſe. From that I have gone upon a more humble ſearch, to try if I could diſcover what it was that had all along induced me to ſpeak of ſuch things. For I aſſure you I meant ſomething; tho', to deal ſincerely, I am not able, at this time, to tell what. Are you conjuror enough to gueſs what I meant?

COL. FREEMAN.

If my knowledge and penetration were equal to your Lordſhip's candor I ſhould not deſpair, however difficult the taſk, of giving you complete ſatisfaction. But as it is only a gueſs you demand, you ſhall have it, hit or miſs; and the more readily as this is not the firſt time I have endeavoured to account to myſelf, for ſo whimſical a phenomenon in human nature. A very little ſedate reflection muſt convince a man of ſenſe that there is no ſtandard of female beauty, to which all the various degrees of it may be referred; and yet it is no leſs plain that thoſe

who every day ſo earneſtly diſpute about thoſe various degrees, muſt have ſomething which they perſuade themſelves is a ſtandard. The queſtion is only, how they came by ſuch a perſuaſion? My conjecture is, that it is acquired by early education, and ſo early, that no man is able to remember its firſt eſtabliſhment in his mind. I ſuppoſe a child of two years old is told that *Miſs what do you call it*, whom he ſees perhaps every day, is vaſtly handſome. This being the firſt time of his learning the word handſome or beautiful, and connecting an idea to it, he will never after be able to ſeparate the word from its original impreſſion; but will, from that accidental conjunction, form to himſelf a general ſyſtem of beauty, and will keep it up, by a ſucceſſive application of it to other women, many years after ſhe who gave birth to his ſyſtem is forgotten. And thus by a perverſe adherence to theory, in a matter entirely practical, he will perſiſt to his dying day in extolling a certain ſort of faces for which he has not the leaſt deſire or affection. In this manner five hundred men may have five hundred ſtandards of beauty; which, tho' all taken from women without any deformity or juſt exception, may be all exceedingly different from one another. What wonder is it then that one man's verdict upon a woman's beauty ſhould be ſo little ſatisfactory to his companion, who meaſures her by another

other ſcale. This cannot be called *diſputing taſtes*; becauſe taſte or ſentiment is here entirely excluded; but it is equally uſeleſs and irrational.

Such, however, ſeem to be the grounds upon which the common run of mankind venture to give their judgment in thoſe matters. With regard to the more inſtructed and polite, there is another circumſtance, which, having more the appearance of a common ſtandard, has abundantly aſſiſted in running them into diſputes concerning beauty; and that is the agreement of painters and ſculptors upon that head; which they ſuppoſe could not happen, if every artiſt was left to his own particular feeling of beauty, without any principles to guide him. But it is very eaſy to account for this agreement, without finding ourſelves much nearer an univerſal ſtandard than we were at firſt. No ſooner were the arts of painting and ſculpture brought to ſome degree of excellence, but the artiſts, in repreſenting a Venus, an Helen, or any other perſonage, from whom beauty was expected, muſt have found all their endeavours to pleaſe rendered ineffectual by the variety of ſentiments which different men, by the various ſtructure of their nerves and organs, have of beauty: ſo that the painter's miſtreſs, however beautiful ſhe might appear to him, and however juſtly he might portray her, would have little chance of charming the ſpectators,

who would each think his own Dulcinea infinitely ſuperior to the Venus. Neither would he mend the matter by ſubſtituting a beauty of his judgment, according to the method juſt deſcribed, whilſt every man had a ſtandard of his own, equally partial, by which he condemned it. Here neceſſity, the mother of invention, would come to his aſſiſtance, and ſet him upon a method that, although it might charm few, would diſguſt no body; that is, to form a face that ſhould affect a medium in all its features and proportions, carefully avoiding every thing extraordinary, however himſelf might be ſtruck with it. He muſt have found that tho' one man, either by a peculiarity of real taſte, or of acquired preposſeſſion, was fond of a high noſe; another thought it deteſtable. That to one a fat cheek was charming, to another a lean one, and that each deſpiſed the other's choice as deformed and ridiculous. The painter's buſineſs was therefore to ſteer as clear as poſſible of theſe oppoſite rocks, and to give his goddeſs neither a high nor a low, but a ſtreight noſe, with checks that were neither fat nor lean, preſerving the ſame mediocrity in all the proportions of her face. Upon ſuch a principle as this we may ſuppoſe it was that Polycletus formed his Venus, which Pliny ſays was called the canon or ſtandard; and that he actually did

did ſo, ſtill farther appears by all the antique ſtatues now remaining; which, by their great ſimilarity, plainly appear to be all copies, more or leſs exact, of one original, framed upon this cautious principle. But it is one thing not to be deformed, and another to be beautiful; one thing to avoid cenſure, and another thing to pleaſe. Neither have I met with ought in the opinions of the eminent painters and ſculptors, with whom I am uſed to converſe, that any way inclines me to alter mine with regard to this matter. Thoſe of them who have ſpent ſome of their beſt years in the ſtudy of the antique ſtatues, and the modern imitations of them all over Italy, have told me that upon their firſt acquaintance they were not ſo much ſtruck with the beauty of their faces; but that the more they ſaw them, the more their admiration of them encreaſed. But this after-admiration is far from being a proof of their having any thing remarkably beautiful in themſelves; and is nothing more than the common effect of habit, which ſhews itſelf not only in things of an indifferent nature, ſuch as cookery, dreſs, and furniture, but often alſo in things that are at firſt extremely nauſeous and diſagreeable, ſuch as tobacco, coffee, and other drugs, which by uſe become ſo bewitching, that their votaries rather chuſe to part with their heaith than reſign them. Here then, in the antique, we find a ſort of common meaſure,

but

but which falls mightily in its value when we conſider that it is only of a negative kind, from which no excellence, no ſtriking grace can be expected: and likewiſe that, imperfect as it is, it is known only to a few, perhaps not one in a hundred of thoſe who talk about regular features; and of thoſe few there is ſtill a much ſmaller number, chiefly painters and ſculptors, on whom the habit of looking at thoſe antiques has been ſo conſtant as to make any real impreſſion. In ſuch it may be called their taſte; but, as I hinted ſome time ago, we muſt be careful not to ſay that ſuch people have a good or a bad taſte; ſince whatever is truly taſte, whether it belonged originally to the nerves, or was produced in them by habit, admits of no compariſon, in point of excellence. All we can ſay with propriety is, that ſuch a man has the tobacco taſte, or the ſugar-candie taſte, or the antique taſte; that is, he likes tobacco, ſugar-candie, or the antique. This has in it nothing comparative, and is only an aſſertion concerning a matter of fact of the ſimpleſt kind.

But, my Lord, I find my eagerneſs in endeavouring to ſatisfy your Lordſhip's demand, has led me into a Profeſſorial kind of diſcourſe, that will be little agreeable, I am afraid, to the Ladies. It is the common effect of ſuch ſubjects; ſo let us call a new cauſe. Pray, Lady Modiſh, has your Ladyſhip ſeen the two new dancers that Rich has brought over?

LADY

LADY MODISH.

Whether I have, or have not, I ſha'n't tell you. And truly, Colonel, you ought to make us ſome apology for breaking off a ſerious converſation upon our account; as if we were incapable of being entertained by any thing but trifles. It is true we are ſeldom tried with any thing elſe, but that is not ſo much our fault as that of you men; who think, no doubt, to preſerve your authority the better by keeping us in ignorance.

LADY HARRIOT.

Indeed, Colonel, the concluſion of your ſpeech does not deſerve, either from my ſiſter or me, any acknowledgments that are favourable; and yet, ſuch is my goodneſs, I cannot help owning that I have been much better entertained with your explanation of taſte, than ever I was with any of thoſe diſputes which it daily occaſions. Moſt men, indeed, who enter upon nice ſubjects before Ladies, ſeem rather, by their latin and cramp words, to aim at aſtoniſhing, than either entertaining or inſtructing us. But I muſt do you the juſtice to ſay that this is never your practice; for you always expreſs yourſelf in ſo plain a way that I fancy I comprehend your whole meaning, tho' it is probable I am ſometimes miſtaken.

COL. FREEMAN.

I acknowledge, Ladies, both the juſtice and gentleneſs of your rebuke, and am perfectly ſenſible that, if I am not underſtood in a ſubject like this, which is not peculiar to any art or profeſſion, the defect is in me, and not in either of your Ladyſhips. And as for the cramp words Lady Harriot mentions, they are ſeldom any thing but ſkreens which vanity has hitherto employed in order to hide ignorance. Of late, philoſophy has put on a more familiar air, and is not aſhamed to have it known that ſhe is nothing but common ſenſe and experience methodiſed; and it ſeems now agreed that the truly learned language is that which is beſt underſtood.

LORD MODISH.

I muſt own, Colonel, that the notion of an univerſal ſtandard for the beauty of natural objects, would be very contradictory to that almoſt ſelf-evident truth, that *whatever is is right*; ſince in the great variety of forms which God has contrived, the benign end of pleaſing would have been fruſtrated, if he had not ordained a like variety to exiſt in the apprehenſions and feelings of different men as well as of different animals concerning thoſe things.

COL. FREEMAN.

It is moſt certainly ſo, my Lord; and it is ſurprizing that ſo many ingenious men ſhould have

have loſt their time in a ſearch, the vanity of which is ſo obvious. Hogarth owns that his line of beauty and grace is not to be ſeen in a toad; which if true, ought to have convinced him, either that there was no ſuch line, or univerſal receipt for beauty; or elſe that he had not yet hit upon it: ſince it hardly admits of a doubt, that a blooming ſhe toad is the moſt beautiful ſight in the creation, to all the crawling young gentlemen of her acquaintance; and that her crawl, or as they may poſſibly call it, her *pas grave*, is far before the minuet ſtep, with all its wavings. An analyſis or diſſection can never be begun of any ſubject till the ſubject itſelf is aſcertained, and conſequently no analyſis can be made of abſtract beauty, nor of any abſtraction whatſoever. Till a real ſomething is diſcovered, which we are ſure by experience is univerſally the ſource of pleaſure, any attempt to diſcover the univerſal principle of pleaſure by analyſis muſt be fruitleſs; and the philoſopher who engages in ſuch a buſineſs, after finding that he has been gravely meaſuring a dream with a pair of compaſſes, will probably return at laſt to the *je ne ſcay quoy*, upon which he had at firſt diſdainfully turned his back. Does your Lordſhip know Sir Roger North?

LORD MODISH.

Yes, a little; he ſeems to be a comical hearty old fellow.

COL.

COL. FREEMAN.

He is ſo, my Lord; but he is ſomething more; for he is a man of a good deal of learning and reflection; though, by a ſtrange turn of temper, he ſeems to be at pains to conceal it, and when his good ſenſe make its appearance, it is commonly under the diſguiſe of waggery. I happened to be walking in the Mall with Sir Harry Beaumont, about a week after Crito was publiſhed, when Sir Roger came up to us, and, after congratulating his brother Baronet upon the ſucceſs of his performance, and the figure it was like to give him in the eyes of the Miſſes, as an arbiter of beauty, Sir Harry, ſays he, I obſerve that in your diſtribution of grace you give twenty degrees to Mrs. A***, and thirty to Mrs. B***. Now I do not find fault with your tables, but I ſhould be glad to know by what ſcale, weight, or meaſure you compute their ſeveral ſhares with ſo much preciſion. You certainly, anſwered Sir Harry, did not read my paper with much attention, or elſe you would have ſeen that *I did not pretend to have made my calculations exactly*; but rather *to point out what might be done by more exact judges of beauty*. Ay, but, Sir Harry, ſays the old Knight, let who will calculate thoſe tables of beauty, it will have but a very unſcholarlike appearance, if, when the exactneſs of their calculations happens to be called in queſtion, they

ſhould

ſhould have nothing better to appeal to, than the infallibility of their own judgments. I am afraid that method would hardly paſs muſter at the Royal Society. Now, you muſt know, when I was a boy I was a great dab at figures, and though I ſeldom foul my fingers with pen and ink, I have not yet forgot the rules, and have been thinking that the rule of three or rule of proportion, might be applied ſo as to become a golden rule in comparing beauties as much as any thing elſe. It is performed, you know, by multiplying the firſt by the ſecond, and dividing by the third; and being curious this morning to know with exactneſs how much Mrs. D*** excelled in beauty Mrs. C***, I thus ſtated the queſtion, *as a cat is to a wheelbarrow, ſo is Mrs. C*** to Mrs. D****; but though I tried till my brain was ready to crack, I never could contrive how to multiply a cat by a wheelbarrow; ſo I could go no farther in my calculations. Now if you, or any other virtuoſo, could fall upon the method of multiplying and dividing ſuch matters; I am perſuaded you would find out a certain method of gauging every woman's beauty, and *prevent it from being any longer left*, as you juſtly complain, *to the particular whim of ignorant people.* Sir Harry was a little ſtunn'd with this whimſical attack, but he did not loſe his good humour, and only ſaid, I ſee you are ſtill the old man, Sir Roger; what ſhould be grave you con-

conſtantly turn to farce, and then left us to run after Miſs Hoyden, who was croſſing towards the palace. When he was gone, ſays Sir Roger to me, Our friend Sir Harry may deſpiſe the old proverb as much as he will, but ſuch *compariſons* will always be *odious*, and it is no wonder, for they will always be abſurd.

LORD MODISH.

I believe, indeed, we muſt leave the beauties of nature, where every thing is perfect in itſelf, to every one's particular taſte, without attempting to diſpute or compare them. But if I give you up that, I hope you will allow us that there may be a good or a bad taſte where the contrivance of man has had a part. What ſay you, for inſtance, to a good taſte in architecture?

COL. FREEMAN.

The ſame, my Lord, that I ſhould ſay to a good taſte in a dreſs or cookery, that, abſtracted from health and conveniency, which are the objects of reaſon, it is one of thoſe taſtes which cuſtom, a ſecond nature, has beſtowed upon us; and is ſo much mere taſte that it can never, with any propriety, become a matter of diſpute or compariſon. To inſiſt upon one form of dreſs, or one form of building, being in itſelf more beautiful than another, muſt appear to a philoſopher entering upon as ſenſleſs a controverſy, as the pretending that one diſh was in it-

ſelf more palatable than another, and that he who preferred the one had a better taſte than he who preferred the other.

LORD MODISH.

But ſure, Colonel, there are rules for the beauties of architecture, and not the ſmalleſt ornament of a baſe or corniſh without its ſettled proportion.

COL. FREEMAN.

Were that ſtrictly the caſe, my Lord, we ſhould call it knowledge or judgment in architecture, not taſte; for, as far as theſe rules go, no taſte is required, either good or bad. An Artiſt may, by a Palladian receipt alone, without any taſte, form a very elegant Corinthian pillar; as a cook, without any palate, and by the help of the *houſewife's vade mecum* only, makes an unexceptionable diſh of *beef a la daube*. Theſe rules are plainly no more than the analyſis of certain things which cuſtom has rendered agreeable; but do not point out to us any natural ſtandard of beauty or flavour, by which ſuch things, whether pillars or diſhes, could have been originally contrived to anſwer the purpoſe of pleaſing. I ſhould be exceedingly glad to hear a reaſon why a Corinthian capital clapt upon its ſhaft upſide-down ſhould not become, by cuſtom, as pleaſing a ſpectacle as in the manner it commonly ſtands. I know this would be look'd upon as a ſort of blaſphemy

by ſome of our dilettanti; but ſo is every opinion, however reaſonable, which oppoſes what is by cuſtom eſtabliſhed in any country. Perhaps there are countries in the world where my capital is ſo much in taſte, that their virtuoſi would be ſurprized to hear that there was any nation ſo abſurd as to put the volutes uppermoſt. At leaſt there is no imagination of that ſort ſo odd that ſome ſimilar experience is not ſufficient to juſtify and render probable.

LORD MODISH.

How then came the preſent faſhion (ſince you will have it to be no better) of architecture to be ſo univerſally embraced?

COL. FREEMAN.

It's univerſality, my Lord, does not extend beyond Chriſtendom; and, if it ſhould become the taſte of the whole univerſe, the ſame means, which have procured it a reception among us, will account for its further progreſs, without our giving ourſelves the trouble of ſearching for any ſtandard in nature for its recommendation. It is the nature of all faſhions (I except only thoſe of a religious kind) to take their riſe from the ſovereign will and pleaſure of the rich and powerful. Men in ſuch circumſtances are known from thence to acquire a preſumption, which naturally induces them to take the lead in every thing; while thoſe very cir-

circumſtances which engage them to indulge their caprices, enable them at the ſame time to render thoſe caprices reſpectable. As for inſtance, let a man of ordinary rank or figure appear in publick in a coat whoſe cuffs are triangular, when the mode is ſquare; and there is no doubt he will meet with many to deſpiſe, but none to imitate him. Let the ſame be tried by a man bleſt with title, riches, youth, and all the trappings of proſperity; let the ſleeve be of velvet, curiouſly embroidered, and part of a ſuit of cloaths in all other reſpects faſhionable and rich, the triangle will then be found to meet with a quite different reception, and tho' feeble in itſelf, will be ſo powerfully ſeconded by, being incorporated with, the title, the embroidery, the coach, and the footman, as to become part of the auguſt idea of his grace; and ſo far from being able to render him ridiculous, will receive a ſhare of reſpect by being part of him; and from being tolerable, will ſoon become an object of imitation, eſpecially to the perſons who are the moſt intimate with him and his cloaths. The more thoſe imitations encreaſe, the more the ſenſation of their beauty is confirmed; till, in a ſhort time, all other cuffs but the triangular are deteſtable. City taylors bribe his Lordſhip's valet de chambre to let them take it's ſhape and proportions; and here is, at laſt, a preciſe rule eſtabliſhed.

LORD MODISH.

My dear George, this is a lamentable ſinking from architecture to cuffs.

COL. FREEMAN.

I do that, my Lord, in imitation of ſome great men of our acquaintance, who let themſelves down very low in order to riſe with the more ſecurity. The progreſs of faſhion in dreſs, and the feelings which are the conſequence of that progreſs, being the moſt familiar, and having at the ſame time the quickeſt revolutions, are of all others the fitteſt to explain the nature of faſhion in general. The faſhions in building, tho' more durable than thoſe in dreſs, are not for that the leſs faſhions, and are equally ſubject to change. But as ſtones and bricks are more laſting than ſilk and velvet, and as people do not make up churches and palaces ſo often as they do coats and capuchines, we muſt have recourſe to hiſtory for the knowledge of thoſe changes, which we can learn but very imperfectly from our own proper experience. In hiſtory we ſhall find that every nation received it's mode of architecture from that nation which, in all other reſpects, was the higheſt in credit, riches, and general eſtimation. The admiration that attends whatever is great in its dimenſions, coſtly in its materials, and preciſe in its execution, is, as far as our experience goes, univerſal; and naturally inclines the mind in favour of any form which accident has combined

bined with thoſe admirable qualities. The Egyptians were the firſt people we know of who were ſo rich, and at their eaſe, as to build with grandeur, coſt, and neatneſs; and from thence inſpired the Greeks with a love for thoſe ornaments which their caprice had added to the uſeful part of architecture. The Greeks, in their turn, becoming for many ages a free, a rich, and a happy people, had an opportunity of practiſing thoſe arts in many ſumptuous buildings; where, beſide the invention of arches, and other ſolid improvements in the art of building, they made many changes, as their fancy led them, upon the Egyptian ornaments. In this ſtate was architecture when it was tranſplanted to Rome, by a people who, by perpetual wars, had in a ſhort time attained from the meaneſt origin, to the greateſt height of power. Deſtitute of money, and profoundly ignorant of all the arts of peace, they had never raiſed any buildings of which they could boaſt; and no ſooner had they an opportunity of conſidering the Grecian temples and other public works, great in themſelves, and ſet off with all that coſtly materials and the genius of their excellent painters and ſculptors could add to the ſkill of the maſon, but ſtruck with the complex object, they decreed the Greeks to be the only architects in the world, and ſubmitted willingly to receive laws in the arts from thoſe whom their Arms had ſubdued. Perhaps the philoſo-

phy, poetry, and muſic of Greece, for which they began at the ſame time to take a reliſh, ſerved not a little to raiſe the reputation of the Greeks, and might ſtrengthen their authority in architecture; tho' not neceſſarily connected with them. An admiration, to a degree of bigotry ſeized the Roman artiſts and connoiſeurs, and put an effectual ſtop to any farther change or improvement in architecture. Their ſole ſtudy was to imitate the Grecian buildings, and the being like or unlike to them became ſoon the meaſure of right and wrong. Rules ſo compiled were committed to writing, and continue to this day, together with ſome of the antient buildings upon which they were formed, to be the ſtandard of taſte all over chriſtendom. Time may poſſibly produce on it inſenſible changes, but there is almoſt nothing which can be imagined to give it a total overthrow, unleſs Europe ſhould become a conqueſt of the Chineſe.

LORD MODISH.

If the five orders of architecture with all their paraphernalia are to reign in ſplendor, till we are conquered by the Chineſe, they need be under little apprehenſion. But, my dear Colonel, allowing this chimerical conqueſt of yours to take place, why muſt our architecture be deſtroyed along with our freedom? Why may we not as well ſuppoſe that our conquerors ſhould receive the faſhion in thoſe

thoſe matters from us, as you ſay the conquering Romans did from the Greeks?

COL. FREEMAN.

Becauſe, my Lord, the circumſtances of the conquerors and the conquered would be very different. In China the arts of peace have been long cultivated, and they have been long charmed with buildings, which though of a taſte very bad, according to our notions, are yet more extenſive and more ſumptuouſly adorned than ours. It would be no wonder, then, if they refuſed to change that form of building which long uſage had rendered graceful, for one which had all the awkwardneſs of novelty, without any other advantage to dazle and prepoſſeſs them in its favour. To them the ſimplicity of the antique would appear mean and ruſtic; and Covent-Garden church, the pride of Engliſh architecture, would be judged fitter for a barn than a temple. Neither do I mention this to your Lordſhip upon bare conjecture, but from the ſimilar experience of what formerly happened in Europe when it was overrun by the Goths. I ſee you ſmile at the mention of my friends the Goths; but allow me to tell your Lordſhip the Goths were not ſo Gothic as they are generally imagined. The arts, indeed, of poetry and painting ſeem to have been unknown or neglected among them; but in that they could be little worſe than the peo-

ple they overcame, and in ſome other reſpects they were much their ſuperiors. Civil diſcord, and all the evils that attend anarchy when joined to a moſt contemptible ſuperſtition, had produced in the Roman empire a poverty of every kind, and an almoſt total obliteration of thoſe arts and ſciences for which the ſame nations had been, but a few centuries before, ſo juſtly celebrated. Among the Gothic nations the art of war was well underſtood, as appears by their conſtant ſuperiority, whenever they appeared in the field; and all the ſtates of Europe, who at this day enjoy any of the bleſſings of good government, are ready to own that from this Gothic ſource thoſe bleſſings were derived. But they were not like the Romans, a gang of meer plunderers, ſprung from thoſe who had been, but a little while before their conqueſt of Greece, naked thieves and runaway ſlaves; but a colony from an empire, no leſs than that of the Parthians, which had long ſubſiſted in ſplendor and magnificence; and which, in eſtabliſhing itſelf upon the ruins of the empire of Perſia, had ſucceeded to the greateſt part of its riches, luxury, and elegance. It is in Parthia or Perſia that we muſt look for the origin of thoſe ſhoals of warlike men, and for the origin of that taſte of architecture of which the ſtately examples ſtill remain, like ſo many trophies to mark the progreſs of their victories. And if we turn our eyes to the ſeats of the preſent Sophi

of

of Perſia, we ſhall there ſee the pointed arch, and all the other parts of what we call Gothic architecture, ſtill in high faſhion, and ſtudded over, as Milton ſays, *with barbaric pearl and gold.*

LORD MODISH.

I do remember, now you put me in mind of it, to have ſeen at Sir John Locke's, a collection of drawings repreſenting bridges, palaces, and moſques, done, as he told me, from the buildings themſelves, while he was reſident at Iſpahan; and which very well correſpond with what you ſay concerning the likeneſs between the Perſian and Gothic taſte of architecture. But I ſhould not think that likeneſs, however ſtrong, a ſufficient proof, that thoſe, who have been always called Northern nations, were really the ſons of the Eaſt.

COL. FREEMAN.

There are, my Lord, a great many other proofs of the Parthic or Perſian extraction of the Goths to be gathered from the ſimilitude of language and manners, and even from the hiſtory of their migration. Some of theſe proofs, as they accidentally occurred to me in my reading, I have been at the pains to commit to paper, and ſhall communicate them to your Lordſhip upon your return to London, if your curioſity leads you to the enquiry. But whether they came from Perſia or Peru, it is plain from the ſight of the firſt public buildings

erected by them, upon their entrance into the Roman provinces, that they came from ſome great and eſtabliſhed empire, where the art of building with grandeur and magnificence had been, by the practice of many ages, brought to an uncommon degree of perfection. Structures ſuch as Weſtminſter Abbey, with which Germany, France, and Spain abound, ſo extenſive, yet ſo neat, ſo ſtrong, and yet ſo richly, nay ſometimes finically ornamented, can never be ſuppoſed the contrivance of hungry ſoldiers, during their march through the enemies country; nor of obſcure ſavages, juſt eſcaped from under the ſnows of Sweden and Norway. Such arts are not ſo ſuddenly brought to perfection as to be the offspring of one man's brain; and if they were, yet the concurrence of all the different branches of thoſe invaders, whether Vandals, Huns, Saxons, Normans, or Franks, in the ſame forms and decorations, plainly ſhew that there were certain antient and eſtabliſhed rules for thoſe things, which they all equally knew and reſpected. To men, thus prepoſſeſſed with ideas both grand and preciſe, the buildings they met with in the Roman provinces muſt have appeared mean and flat; and if they deſtroyed any of them without heſitation, whenever they ſtood in their way, it muſt not be attributed to their barbarous inſenſibility of what was elegant; but to their overweening fondneſs for their own taſte, and unreaſonable deſire of impoſing it upon

on others: a malady, which the moſt poliſhed people when unreſtrained by reaſoning and reflection, are equally ſubject to, with the moſt ſavage.

LORD MODISH.

That the Goths did make their taſte of architecture the reigning taſte over Europe for ſeveral ages, I very well know. But, my dear George, your reaſon for its taking place of the Grecian, is not at all ſatisfactory; for if it bore it down at firſt by its loftineſs and richneſs, it might, with much more eaſe, have maintained its ſuperiority, after being familiariſed by time to the conquered, as well as to their invaders. I ſhould conclude, therefore, from the reſtoration of the Greek architecture, that it had ſomething in its forms peculiarly adapted to pleaſe the ſight, which made it at length ſurmount all the obſtacles which force and cuſtom had thrown in its way.

COL. FREEMAN.

Your doubts, my Lord, are exceedingly juſt, and I do not believe that any degree of knowledge in lines and numbers would ever be able to ſolve them. But there are many ſeeming myſteries, and which continue ſuch againſt all the powers of abſtract reaſoning, which hiſtory, by leading us ſtep by ſtep, renders plain and ſimple. For many ages had biſhops and barons, monks and knights errant, kept the people of Europe in ſlavery and diſſention, ſloth, ignorance

rance and misery. All the arts which tended to render life more humane and agreeable, were utterly discountenanced and forbid; and those alone kept up and practised, which were of use in supporting the pride and power of those tyrants. Canon law to defend the wordly pretensions of church-men, and metaphysics to promote and defend their spiritual absurdities, for the same gainful purpose, were what passed currently by the name of learning. When these failed, in determining the truth or falshood of a proposition, recourse was had, legally and coolly, to single combat; a kind of logic, absurd enough in all conscience, and yet perhaps not the most absurd kind then in use. Painting and sculpture were not yet found necessary to be called in aid of these holy cheats; so no man, as may well be supposed, presumed to carve or draw the resemblance of any thing upon earth. Military architecture shewed itself only in the castles of private gentlemen, with moats and draw-bridges; and the civil was only to be looked for in cathedrals and cloisters. The rest were all hovels and beggary. At last, about the fourteenth century, the cloud of ignorance began to disperse. The arrogance and avarice of the church of Rome had stretched the cord till it cracked, and brought on, in several parts of Europe, an enquiry into the spiritual rights of mankind, which that corporation had so grossly invaded; and these having been so interwoven with

with their temporal rights, the enquiry always became the more extenſive, the farther it proceeded; ſo that books, and all the other means of knowledge, became every day more and more in requeſt. About this time the Greeks, flying from the Turks, after the taking of Conſtantinople, brought over their books and language into Italy: which, partly by the countenance and patronage of the family of Medicis, in a little time became a faſhionable part of learning, till then utterly unknown in the Weſt. A like unfortunate cauſe with that which brought over the learned Grecians, had before that time tranſported to Florence ſome Greek painters, bad indeed, but ſufficiently ſkilful to ſow thoſe ſeeds of the art, which, by proper encouragement, firſt at Florence, and afterwards at Rome, Venice, and Bologna, arrived at ſo admirable a degree of perfection. The polite arts, and all the ſeveral branches of true learning, have ſo immediate a connection that they always march together; and it is impoſſible to find any one of them in a tolerable degree, without finding along with it ſome portion of each of the reſt. Thus, at the ſame time that the Greek and Roman claſſics were diligently ſought after, amidſt the duſt and ſcholaſtic nonſenſe of the libraries and convents; the pick-ax was every where employed among the ruins, in ſearch of ſtatues and bas-reliefs, which the ignorance and miſery of the times had ſuffered to lie for ages under ground. At

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the court of Rome, for the ſupport of whoſe power ſome meaſure of true learning was at laſt become neceſſary, theſe enquiries after the learning and elegance of their heathen anceſtors, were carried on with the greateſt eagerneſs; and the riſing love of painting, ſculpture, and muſic, was not a little promoted by the uſe they perceived thoſe arts might be of, in ſupporting a gainful ſuperſtition juſt ready to fall into contempt. Then it was that the Romans began to caſt an eye of admiration upon the noble remains of heathen architecture, with which their city is, to this day, ſo richly ſtored. In that imperial city, the Gothic people, tho' they had, oftener than once, committed horrible devaſtations, had never made any ſettlement, nor ever raiſed any fabric. The buildings there had ever been according to the Grecian taſte; but that being kept up only by tradition, without any preciſe rules, it had changed extremely from its original. To effect a total alteration in the faſhions of any country, is an exceeding difficult undertaking; but here was only required a reformation, and a reformation that had antiquity and primitive purity for its principles. No ſooner, then, was the love of heathen antiquity afloat, but the Bramantes and Michelangelos ſet themſelves with great diligence to meaſure all the parts of all the antient buildings of Rome, and ſoon, by the help of Vitruvius, compoſed a ſyſtem of architecture, which, as far as it

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pretended to go, brought back the Auguſtan age to the maſons and carpenters. Florence, and the reſt of the cities of Italy, that were, with reſpect to architecture, in almoſt the ſame ſtate with Rome, entered readily into this ſcheme of reformation, which, croſſing the Alps, with the joint cry of all Italy, at that time the ſchool of learning and politeneſs, carried every thing before it. And thoſe Gothic ſtructures, which had ſo long lorded it over all other works of ſtone and mortar, were now decryed as gigantic and barbarous. Increaſe of trade and riches, all over Europe, particularly from the new-diſcovered Indies, produced a great number of ſumptuous buildings in the new faſhion; ſo that the fondneſs for it, which was probably, at firſt, no more than an affectation of Italian elegance, grew, in a little time, to be a real taſte or ſentiment.

LORD MODISH.

Of buildings did he ſpeak, like Solomon, from the Pyramids of Egypt, even to the Banqueting houſe at Whitehall. As I hope to be ſaved, George, you would make an excellent grand maſter of the free and accepted Maſons, and would prelect upon the wonders of the Letter G, to the aſtoniſhment of the whole lodge. But, ſeriouſly, we are all vaſtly obliged to you for this ſhort hiſtory of a long tranſaction, many particulars of which I knew before, but never before heard them connected in ſo regular a chain.

chain. What you have ſaid to prove that the beauties of architecture have no deeper foundation than faſhion, that is habit formed upon caprice, carries with it great appearance of truth. But you philoſophy men, when you take up any principle, are very apt to carry it farther than it will go, and to a ſingle cauſe often aſcribe an effect which perhaps proceeds from half a dozen. In many caſes I will allow you that habit has a ſhare in forming our ſentiments; but is there not likewiſe an inſeparable connection between beauty and propriety? And will not that which is fit and ſuitable in itſelf, be always more or leſs pleaſing to the beholder?—I am afraid I don't expreſs my meaning in the proper terms.

COL. FREEMAN.

Exactly, my Lord, like one of the trade. Such are the very expreſſions uſed by the followers of Hutchiſon, Shaftſbury, and Plato; who drew, moreover, this very obvious concluſion from them, that, by our different feelings or ſenſations of pleaſure and diſlike, we may ſafely pronounce the objects, from whence thoſe ſenſations ariſe, to be right or wrong in themſelves, without any farther examination or reflection. Happy ſenſe for thoſe who are endowed with it, and for which one would willingly renounce all human underſtanding, which is liable to many errors. What pity is it that ſo pleaſing an opinion, ſo elegant

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a ſyſtem ſhould have no foundation in fact! Hold up, for a moment, the mirror of experience to this metaphyſical phantom, and it ſhrinks into the nothing from whence it ſprung. The approbation of reaſon, and the approbation of taſte, which thoſe gentlemen have been at ſo much pains to unite and confound, will be found in their nature diſtinct and ſeparate, and to be allotted for viſibly different purpoſes by the author of our nature. That they often coincide is likewiſe true; but it is owing to other cauſes than their natural and inſeparable connection, as will be perceived in examining the caſes where this coincidence does, and where it does not appear. To begin with the moſt ſimple: The apothecary's prentice brings a doſe of the bark to a man ſick of the ague: The reaſon and experience of the phyſician, perhaps the patient's own experience, aſſure him, that ſwallowing this drug will reſtore him to his health. What ſays taſte? That it is the devil of a doſe; that it ought to be put off till to-morrow, and in the mean time calls for t'other bottle of Champaign. Taſte then has no ſkill in phyſick. Let us ſee next whether taſte, in its more remote and figurative applications, is more cloſely allied to fitneſs and utility. Amongſt the objects of ſight, there are none with which we are ſo familiar as thoſe which dreſs exhibits, nor, as I before obſerved to your Lordſhip, ſo proper to produce examples for this ſubject. And

there it will be ever found that our feelings of pleaſure and diſlike are conducted entirely by cuſtom, not only in matters indifferent, but often in oppoſition to what is uſeful and proper. Pray, Lady Modiſh, what would your Ladyſhip think of our fine gentlemen, if they were to dreſs with their arms naked to the elbows?

LADY MODISH.

I ſhould certainly think them very ſhocking creatures; at leaſt if I may gueſs by the diſguſting appearance which butchers and hatters make in the like equipage.

COL. FREEMAN.

Your Ladyſhip, I am perſuaded, ſpeaks not only your own ſentiments, but likewiſe the ſentiments of all the ladies in England, upon the occaſion. All would agree unanimouſly, at firſt, in its being an ugly ſight; and yet it is impoſſible to find out, in the naked arm of a well-proportioned man, any natural impropriety whence this ſentiment of deformity ariſes; nor any that is not equally, at leaſt, attached to the naked arm of a well-proportioned woman, an object which is allowed to raiſe in every one a ſentiment very oppoſite. Cuſtom alone can account for this whimſical taſte, which breaks thro' all rules of reaſon and propriety; for a diſengagement from ſleeves is without doubt

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moſt befitting the ſex which is the moſt active, and deſtined for robuſt exerciſe and labour; and a cloſe covering, eſpecially in a cold climate, the moſt proper for that ſex which ſuffers moſt from its inclemency. I have lived long enough in the world, Ladies, to ſee a great many changes in it, particularly with regard to ſhoe-buckles, which have been now large, now ſmall, now round, now ſquare, and all, in their turns, fraught with beauty and deformity. Theſe changes are productive of much good to many induſtrious tradeſmen and their families, and, generally ſpeaking, very indifferent to the wearers. But I remember, about ſeven or eight years ago, the buckles, from the toes, where they had reigned in ſplendor ſome years before, had inſenſibly crept up to the leg; and ſo great was the deſire, in our ſmarts, of creating pleaſing feelings in the beholders by an amazing length of foot, that I have ſeen many of them limping about Ranelagh with their buckles above the joint, and ſuffering no ſmall torture rather than they ſhould appear with turpitude in a more convenient place. Inſtances of this kind in architecture are not ſo eaſily found. Building is, by its nature, a more ſerious and more deliberate affair than dreſs, and leſs ſubject, one would think, to the influence of whim; yet it is not altogether deſtitute of

examples, where the eye is pleaſed with what is the reverſe of conveniency. For ſome of theſe a general cauſe, or rather origin, may be aſſigned. The preſent taſte of architecture was formed, not upon the palaces and dwelling-houſes of the antient Greeks and Romans, of which there were no veſtiges at the revival of the arts, but upon their temples and other public buildings, from which the ornamental part has been borrowed and applied to domeſtic uſe, in a manner abundantly abſurd, for the moſt part; and which, nevertheleſs, cuſtom has rendered agreeable to the ſight. I could name to your Lordſhip ſeveral houſes, beſides my Lord Mayor's, where the deſire of charming the paſſengers, has induced the architect to darken the principal apartments, by clapping before the windows ſtately pillars which ſupport nothing, or, which is much the ſame, nothing of any uſe. Whatever pains thoſe gentlemen may take to dignify the ornamental part of their art by ſcientific reaſonings about propriety and fitneſs, it will be found at laſt to owe all its power of pleaſing to cuſtom only. Aſk one of them by what means it is, that a window pleaſes by being longer than it is broad, and a chimney by being broader than it is long; he will tell you, that it is from their natural fitneſs for their ſeveral purpoſes, ſuch and ſuch being the nature

nature of light, and ſuch and ſuch being the nature of ſmoak. But let him be ever ſo learned in light and ſmoak, this is but a ſhallow ſolution of the difficulty. The plain truth is, that on account of their fitneſs for their ſeveral purpoſes, they have been from time immemorial ſo formed; but it is the habit of ſeeing them conſtantly ſo formed, and not their fitneſs, which produces in us that ſenſe of their beauty. This proceſs will account for all the conjunctions of beauty and propriety, which to moſt people paſs for neceſſary connections. What is the reaſon that any heavy body, ſupported by few and weak pillars, gives us an unpleaſing feeling? Becauſe the danger and inconveniency of ſuch a diſpoſition has been long known, and with care avoided; ſo that the leaſt infringement of the eſtabliſhed practice will ſhock us immediately by its unuſualneſs, without allowing our reaſon to interfere by a ſlow diſcuſſion of its impropriety. In like manner may we account for all that concerns moral taſte and ſentiment; which will appear, upon the ſlighteſt compariſon of the feelings of different nations with regard to behaviour, to be immediately and neceſſarily dependant upon cuſtom, and but remotely and accidentally connected with right and wrong, or the invariable fitneſs of things.

LORD MODISH.

I begin to be afraid that taſte, at laſt, muſt content himſelf with ruling over the finer arts. There I think you will hardly try to pull him from his throne.

COL. FREEMAN.

What arts does your Lordſhip comprehend under that title?

LORD MODISH.

Muſic, poetry, and painting; or, as they call them, the ſiſter arts.

COL. FREEMAN.

I know they are often ſo called; and indeed there is ſo great a likeneſs betwixt two of them, poetry and painting, that their ſiſterhood will be readily allowed: but betwixt muſick and painting there is no likeneſs at all; and I am apt to ſuſpect that muſick paſſes for the ſiſter of poetry, rather from their being often ſeen in company, than from any reſemblance they bear to each other. For this reaſon, when I examine how far taſte is concerned in theſe arts, I ſhall conſider muſick by itſelf. But either the diſtinction betwixt taſte and judgment, which I gave your Lordſhip ſome time ago, is falſe, or

or elſe taſte is totally excluded from being a determiner in works of art, and muſt leave that taſk for judgment to perform. An art has been thus defined by one of the moſt ſagacious of the antients, *a ſyſtem of rules acquired by ſtudy, and reduced to practice, for ſome uſeful purpoſe.* Now wherever there is a rule or rules, by which any work is ſuppoſed to be conducted, that rule, being known, muſt ſerve equally for a ſtandard to thoſe who would determine with propriety concerning its merit or degree of excellence. An art, then, and whatever pretends to a ſtandard, is an object of judgment and not of taſte. As to muſick, it is certainly an art, ſo far as geometry is concerned in it; but as the mathematical part of muſick is totally unknown to 999 in a thouſand of thoſe who ſet up for connoiſſeurs in muſick, including the performers, we may venture to ſay that it is, with regard to them, no art at all. Theſe virtuoſos, therefore, have nothing but their own taſte, that is, their own private liking, to ſet up for a ſtandard, or, what is little more mathematical, the liking which thoſe of their club, city, or nation have acquired by habit, that is, by the daily repetition of a certain ſtrain of muſick. What diſputes therefore happen upon that ſubject muſt be no leſs abſurd, than when cookery is the ſubject of controverſy. With regard

to the ſiſter arts of painting and poetry, the caſe is very different: for in theſe arts there is not only a ſtandard, but one ſo level to the common ſenſe of mankind, that the moſt ignorant are acquainted with it; and, if it is unknown or miſtaken by any, it is by the half-learned, who from their own conceit, or a reſpect for the authority of coxcombs, have tried to undervalue common ſenſe, in order to ſubſtitute ſomething which they thought better, in its ſtead.

LORD MODISH.

There is no doubt, Colonel, that there are rules for poetry and painting, and that there have been many ingenious books written both in proſe and verſe concerning theſe rules. But I fancy they are not ſo univerſally known as you would have us believe.

COL. FREEMAN.

Pardon me, my Lord; I have reaſon to be convinced by a thouſand experiments, that the leading principle of criticiſm in poetry and painting, and that of all the learned principles which is the moſt unexceptionably true, is known to the loweſt and moſt illiterate of the people. Thoſe experiments are eaſily made. Your Lordſhip has only to hide yourſelf behind the ſcreen in your drawing-room,

room, and order Mrs. Hannah to bring in one of your tenant's daughters, and I will venture to lay a wager that ſhe ſhall be ſtruck with your picture by La Tour, and no leſs with the view of your ſeat by Lambert, and ſhall, fifty to one, expreſs her approbation by ſaying, they are *vaſtly natural*. When ſhe has ſaid this, ſhe has ſhewn that ſhe knew the proper ſtandard, by which her approbation was to be directed, as much, at leaſt, as ſhe would have done, if ſhe had got Ariſtotle by heart and all his commentators. He has defined thoſe arts, *arts of imitation*, and his definition, though often obſcured and confounded by more modern connoiſſeurs, has never been contradicted by any. The ſame country girl, who applauds the exact repreſentation of a man and a houſe which ſhe has ſeen, will, for the ſame reaſon, be charmed with Hogarth's march to Finchly, as that is a repreſentation, though not of perſons, yet of general manners and characters, with which we may ſuppoſe her to be acquainted. And if ſhe is leſs ſtruck with the hiſtorical pictures of diſtant ages and countries, though equally well painted, it is not becauſe her critical ſtandard is not equally applicable to them, but becauſe the ſubject and manners, there meant to be repreſented, are to her unknown, and muſt paſs with as little obſerva-

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tion and remark as a good portrait of a perſon whom ſhe had never ſeen. In all this I ſee no pretenſion taſte has to be conſulted. It requires firſt eyes to ſee, and then judgment to compare the exhibited image with that of the abſent object, which is ſtored up in the remembrance, and is plainly a reflective and compound operation of the mind. It is indeed ſo quick and inſtantaneous, that it often paſſes for a ſimple feeling or ſentiment; and is ſometimes mentioned as ſuch by criticks of no mean reputation, for want of having conſidered the nature of the mental faculties with that accuracy which they deſerved. The general ſtandard of poetry is exactly the ſame, and equally obvious with that of painting; and any experiment you make in that art upon a farmer's daughter, will be found to have a like event. It is only middling poetry which the illiterate do not underſtand and admire; when it arrives at a ſupreme degree of excellence it is adapted to the loweſt claſs; and though other poets might have their partiſans amongſt the critics, there is no queſtion, but Homer was the delight of every cook-maid in Greece.

LORD MODISH.

What, and won't you allow good and bad in poetry to be diſtinguiſhable by taſte upon any occaſion?

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COL. FREEMAN.

No, my Lord.

LORD MODISH.

Then, my dear Colonel, your ſpeculations and your common language are very little conſiſtent: for you ſaid, no longer ago than this morning, upon glancing over ſome madrigals which are publiſhed in Rowe's edition of Shakeſpear, that the people of that age had a wretched *taſte* in poetry.

COL. FREEMAN.

It is true, my Lord; and I own myſelf to blame in uſing a word upon any occaſion, which, as appears by the converſation we have had, is applied to ſo many different purpoſes, as to be unfit for any. We have ſeen that it ſometimes ſignifies *the faculty of diſtinguiſhing things ſimply and without compariſon*; ſometimes *that which pleaſes ſimply*; ſometimes *that which pleaſes by particular habit*, but moſt commonly, *that which pleaſes by general habit*, or what is properly expreſſed by the ſingle word *faſhion*. In this laſt ſenſe it was, my Lord, that I underſtood the word taſte, when I ſaid the taſte of poetry was very bad in England, about a century ago; although it

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is certain no age ever more abounded with men of genius and ſtudy.

LORD MODISH.

Darker and darker, by Pluto! I fancied, Colonel, about half an hour ago, that I had got a little light into your ſyſtem, but now I don't ſee one glimpſe. You told us then, that poetry was an art, and the object of judgment, and now you give us to underſtand, that neither imagination, reading, nor reflection, for that I ſuppoſe you mean by genius and ſtudy, are able to keep it in the right road.

COL. FREEMAN.

It is but too true, my Lord; theſe things can avail but little in the conducting of poetry, if faſhion, or, as they pleaſe to call it, taſte, takes it into his head to miſlead her. And when, by the neglect of juſt principles, any nation has habitually acquired a liking or taſte to cookery that is unwholeſome, to architecture that is inconvenient, or to poetry that, inſtead of inſtruction, conveys no ideas, or, what is worſe, falſe ideas to the mind: we may ſay, with great propriety, that ſuch a nation has a vitiated or a bad taſte.

LORD

LORD MODISH.

But how could habit, for I perceive now a little what you mean, ſo ſoon pervert our writers as to lead them all together into the ſame ſort of error, even at the very firſt appearance of poetry in England?

COL. FREEMAN.

To come eaſily, my Lord, to the knowledge of this, it will be neceſſary, once more, to turn our eyes to what was doing in the ages which preceded this. In thoſe days, when miraculous legends under the name of hiſtory, and the abſurdeſt of metaphyſicks by way of philoſophy, compoſed almoſt the whole of learning; poetry, which ever ſhares the fate of hiſtory and philoſophy, was likewiſe at the loweſt ebb. Inſtead of repreſentations of truth, and the real exiſtence of things, it conſiſted only of relations in ryme of giants, winged horſes, griffins, caſtles moated round with fire and brimſtone, knights that killed ten or a dozen men by one blow, and hermits that raiſed as many from the dead by one prayer; with a thouſand other lies, which, however monſtrous and unentertaining they may appear to us, were to thoſe people ſo correſpondent to the ideas that had been early impoſed by authority upon them, that they

appeared not only probable, but true: and although this correſpondence of ideas could not be very ſtriking, as it is impoſſible for the idle chimeras of a writer's brain to be exactly the ſame with thoſe of his reader, yet they ceaſed not, along with perſuaſion, to give them ſome ſort of amuſement. This was the ſtate of the epic; and low as it might be, was only to be found in the happier climates of Italy and the ſouth of France. There likewiſe they pretended to a ſort of lyric poetry, under the name of ſonnets and madrigals, which, being founded upon the metaphyſical quibbling then in vogue, inſtead of the truth of paſſion and ſentiment, was wholly made up of jugling expreſſions, that, with much ſubtlety, kept up a ſeeming relation betwixt thoughts, in themſelves, not at all akin. A ſort of writing, though called by ſome people to this day *wit*, much inferior to fair punning; as it equally trifles with the underſtanding, without the merit of ſhaking the ſides. The arts, however, by the means I mentioned ſome time ago, began to revive; but they did not all keep an equal pace in their improvement. Though hiſtory was ſoon brought, in Italy, to a great degree of excellence, philoſophy, ſtill a ſtranger to experiment, continued to be only a leſs abſurd ſort of metaphyſicks; and by keeping trifling ſubtleties ſtill in requeſt, likewiſe

likewiſe retarded the ſympathetic improvement of poetry: while her ſiſter painting, diſdaining the ſlow, bungling, and deceitful medium of words, ſoon ſhone forth with all the luſtre of nature and truth. All, however, were equally admired by the nations on this ſide of the Alps, who, having ſmall pretenſions of their own, and aſtoniſhed with the tranſcendent glory of Italy, received indiſcriminately every thing that came from thence as the model of perfection. In England, for cauſes that are eaſily aſſigned, the art of painting never took root; but, though none of our artiſts were inſpired with the divine ſpirit of Raphael and Corregio, our poets were much the worſe for having read Dante, Arioſto, and Petrarch; the imitation of whom they preferred to good ſenſe and the imitation of nature. From this cauſe proceeded the tedious allegories, as they call them, of Spenſer, and the jingling and ſtrained conceits of Sir Philip Sidney. Happily for us there were no Italian models for tragedy; elſe Shakeſpear's Othello might have been as poor as his ſonnets; and yet, even in theſe his moſt unrivalled performances, the mode is often ſeen to prevail over the genius and reflection of that great poet. Soon after this importation of Italian taſte, the power and majeſty of the Commons of England began to ſhew itſelf; and as the conteſts concern-

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ing the liberty and rights of Chriſtians had introduced a ſpirit of enquiry into Europe, ſo that ſpirit was carried ſtill farther in England, by a new conteſt concerning the peculiar rights of Engliſhmen. Along with liberty all manner of property was farther aſcertained, and that exorbitant power reſtrained, which had been exerciſed by kings and prieſts over the opinions and ſentiments, as well as the goods, of the people. The pleaſure that ariſes from the diſcovery of truth, and the juſt relation of things, is one of the greateſt and moſt laſting which human nature is capable of; and ſo ſtrong it is that to ſtifle and repreſs it requires no ſmall degree of violence. But this being withdrawn, the natural deſire again takes place, and always with ſucceſs. So it happened in England, where learning went hand in hand with the conſtitution in all its changes. As liberty and order grew, learning and juſt ſentiments flouriſhed; as thoſe degenerated into enthuſiaſm and anarchy, a like feaver ſucceeded in the ſtate of literature. It was madneſs, indeed, but it was of the vigorous ſort, from whence much good was ſtill to be expected. Accordingly, upon the return of a more ſettled government at the Reſtoration, when liberty was tempered by a certain degree of fixed ſubordination, the ſciences likewiſe took a more orderly and more polite

turn,

turn, without giving up any of that freedom which they had assumed. Party controversies lost much of their acrimony, and men began to use the weapons and dexterity which they had acquired in these contests, to more peaceable and more valuable purposes. The Royal Society was founded, and those hints which Sir Francis Bacon had given with regard to experimental philosophy, were diligently prosecuted by the ingenious men of that age; so that authority began, by little and little, to give way to matter of fact, supposition to certainty, and words to things. But though in motion, still the progress of poetry was slow. It is not enough for poets to compose in times of good sense: it is necessary, in order to their writing well, that they should be born in such times. The ideas, which fill the infant imagination, will always, more or less, keep possession of it; and are not easily to be changed by later knowledge and reflection. Notwithstanding these new improvements in knowledge, the gentle Waller still decked his Sachariſſa, with such unscented gum-flowers as had adorned the Laura of Petrarch; and still Milton thought it proper to march his angels in a cubic phalanx of well-bodied air, to attack as formidable a body of devils, who received them with cannon in their hands, and puns in

their mouths. Intrepid devils, that knowing themſelves to be immortal, dared to look death in the face, and to expoſe their unſubſtantial forms to be pierced by the immaterial ſpears of their adverſaries. What greater inſtance can be required of the deteſtable influence of romantic and ſcholaſtic jargon, than its producing ſuch a hodge-podge in the brain of a man who has given ſuch proofs upon other occaſions, of a truly natural and noble genius. At laſt the Revolution, by eſtabliſhing the rights of the ſeveral orders in the commonwealth upon a clear and ſolid baſis, made way for an entire diſſolution of that alliance, which had long been ſo ſtupidly and villainouſly cemented betwixt religion and politics. Metaphyſics, now no longer neceſſary in ſupport of opinions which were now no longer uſeful in the acquiſition of power and riches, ſunk by degrees into contempt; and Nature having at laſt ſhewn her true and beautiful face, poetry, from acting the part of a magic lanthorn teeming with monſters and chimeras, reſumed her genuine province, like the camera obſcura, of reflecting the things that are. The antient Greek and Roman poets being found to have conducted themſelves more than any other, by this principle, the admiration of them encreaſed; and they, inſtead of the Italians, were cho-

ſen, to ſet the faſhion, or, as we call it, to form the taſte of writing. From them, and from their miſtreſs, Nature, Prior, Addiſon, Pope, Swift, Parnel, and the reſt of their cotemporary bards, received the leaven, and conveyed it, in their works, to the whole maſs of the people. At this very day, when few men take the trouble of becoming very learned, and fewer give to the public any proofs of their poetic fire, the taſte acquired by the laſt age in certain kinds of poetry, ſtill continues; and the moſt inſipid odes, that appear in the magazines, are better able to ſtand a critical diſcuſſion, than thoſe that were written by the brighteſt wits a hundred years ago.

LORD MODISH.

Then you eſteem thoſe magaziners to be good critics, though but paultry poets; I ſhould think that required ſomewhat more learning than you ſeem willing to allow them.

COL. FREEMAN.

No more, my Lord, than it requires knowledge of geometry to navigate a ſhip to Jamaica; which, though it ariſes from the deepeſt rules of ſcience, is daily performed by thoſe who never heard of Euclid, and who are not capable to go through the eaſieſt

of his demonſtrations. Theſe arts, though it coſt many ages of ſtudy to men of genius to bring them to perfection, are, as far as regards a limited practice, eaſily communicated, by rote, to the greateſt dunce. A very good pilot, who ſhould venture to diſpute upon the principles of navigation, would probably diſcover extreme ignorance; and the ſame daily happens to men of mere taſte whenever they meddle with criticiſm: ſo far is good criticiſm from being a vulgar thing, that even the taſte of the public, is ſtill falſe in ſome kinds of poetry, particularly in tragedy; under which auguſt title five acts of language, ſuch as no mortal man ever ſpoke, ſeldom fails of putting the profits of three full houſes into the author's pocket. A convincing proof that thoſe who frequent the theatre judge of the elegance of a poem, as they do of the cock of a hat, and have nothing to influence them in their determination but mere taſte, or a feeling of what is become by habit agreeable to them. Were they to judge by the principles of art, their deciſions would be equally juſt in all kinds of writing.

LORD MODISH.

I hope you don't lay this likewiſe to the charge of the poor Italians; for I don't think

think we have ever been much troubled with their tragedies.

COL. FREEMAN.

No, my Lord, it proceeds, I apprehend, from an influence much more powerful and popular, the example of our own Shakeſpear; though, perhaps, the French tragedians have not been wanting with their aſſiſtance.

LORD MODISH.

This is ſomewhat new from you, Colonel, who uſed to ſpeak with raptures of the genius of Shakeſpear.

COL. FREEMAN.

It is that very genius, my Lord, which is the cauſe of this evil; and we may ſay of it as Cato ſays of Cæſar's virtue, *Curſe on his genius, it has undone his Country.* Dazled by the ſhining parts of ſuch eminent perſonages, we are inſenſibly led to admire and to imitate, without diſtinction, every thing that belongs to them. What we cannot admire, at firſt, or what we even diſapprove, we receive with difference, and uſe brings us in time to be more or leſs pleaſed with it. All with juſtice applaud when Hotſpur

gives the contemptuous deſcription of the courtier who came to demand his priſoners, ſo full of that pride and vivacity which conſtitute his character; but it was never yet known that the pit treated the actor with a hiſs, or an *off*, *off*, *off*, when, in his relation of Mortimer's combat with Glendower, he ſays

> Three times they breath'd, and three times did they drink,
> Upon agreement, of ſwift Severn's flood,
> Who then affrighted with their bloody looks,
> Ran fearfully among the trembling reeds,
> And hid his criſped head in the hollow bank,
> Blood-ſtained with theſe valiant combatants.

LORD MODISH.

There are, no doubt, falſe thoughts to be found in Shakeſpear; but as it is equally certain they do not bear any proportion to thoſe that are juſt and noble, may not we reaſonably ſuppoſe, that the imitation of him ſhould be more uſeful than hurtful to our modern tragedians.

COL.

COL. FREEMAN.

That is a happineſs, my Lord, which never yet befell the imitators of any of the great maſters. To equal them in their beauties they muſt draw them, as they did, from the pure fountain of nature. Their faults they may acquire from them, as they acquired them from other faulty poets. Had not Shakeſpear been perverted by wrong taſte and imitation, he could never have produced ſuch lines as thoſe I have repeated. Nature could never have pointed out to him that a river was capable of cowardice, or that it was conſiſtent with the character of a gentleman, ſuch as Piercy, to ſay *the thing that was not*. It is good rules alone that can ſave a poet from ſuch blunders, which taſte is ever ready to lead him into.

LORD MODISH.

Want of rules might indeed have been the cauſe of thoſe errors in Shakeſpear; but that is not, ſurely, the caſe with the modern tragedians, either French or Engliſh. They have had critics and rules in abundance.

COL. FREEMAN.

No doubt they have, my Lord; but ſuch critics as are worſe than none; and ſuch

rules as ſerve to miſlead their obſervers to ſuch a degree, as to make them leſs fit to judge of poetry than nurſes and children: rules that are drawn from the works of authors, and not from common ſenſe, or the general feelings of mankind. Aſk one of thoſe criticks for a reaſon, and he gives you an authority; if you repeat your demand, it's ten to one but he fobs you off with one of thoſe cramp words, that Lady Harriot has ſuch a diſlike to. As for inſtance, if you aſk Boſſu, or any of the reſt of the Ariſtotelians, how the Severn came to be ſo hen-hearted, as to turn tail and hide itſelf, on the ſight of Glendower's and Mortimer's bloody faces, he will tell you that it is by a figure called proſopopoia. This it is to underſtand Greek. A ſoundheaded, though leſs learned critick, would probably have ſaid, that it was by a figure called nonſenſe.

LORD MODISH.

What, and do you deſpiſe the poetics of Ariſtotle, which have been revered through ſo many ages?

COL. FREEMAN.

Far from it, my Lord; I look upon them as a moſt valuable remnant of antient erudition;

tion; and, taking all circumſtances into the account, a prodigious proof of the genius of the author. But I muſt own I deſpiſe thoſe moderns, who overlooking all the new diſcoveries, which time, perhaps, rather than human wit, has produced for them, do ſtill, by a moſt unholy bigotry, put their truſt in his infallibility. What would you think, Lady Harriot, of a critick who could not conceive a dramatic entertainment to ſubſiſt, with any degree of excellence, without a perpetual accompanyment of muſic?

LADY HARRIOT.

Indeed, Colonel, I ſhould fancy that he had never ſeen any thing but Italian operas.

COL. FREEMAN.

Your Ladyſhip's gueſs, is not far wide of the mark; and yet, ſuch is the ſentiment of the great Greek, of whoſe profound knowledge you muſt have read ſuch wonders in Pope, and the reſt of the Belles-lettres-writers of your acquaintance. If any of our London connoiſſeurs were to adviſe Garrick to get Othello ſet to muſick, by way of giving it more force and expreſſion, it is not likely he would be any more conſulted in theatrical matters. Not that I mean to detract from the real merit of Ariſtotle. His

poetic

poetic ſyſtem will ever deſerve the attention of the learned, as it is founded upon the ſolid baſis of experience; but as this was only the experience of what pleaſed in his age and country, it is too narrow a baſis to erect ſo lofty a pile upon, as an art of poetry. Inſtead of ſearching into nature for ſome univerſal principle of pleaſure in that art, by which he might in time form the taſte of his own, and of every country, he, from what happened in his time to be their taſte, formed thoſe rules which have been tranſmitted to us, and received as a work of deep philoſophy, and in which the whole myſtery of writing was revealed.

The more we examine into facts, the more reaſon we ſhall have to be convinced, that taſte ought never to be allowed to dictate in poetry; ſince, when ever taſte happens to be good, it is only the conſequence, not the cauſe of good writing. Judgment and rules, whoſe humble ſervant and follower taſte ought to be, are alone fit to decide, whether he is right or wrong.

LORD MODISH.

So then, good taſte in poetry proceeds from good poetry, good poetry from good philoſophy, and good philoſophy from good government. A very curious genealogy.

COL.

Col. FREEMAN.

I have never yet, my Lord, met with any thing to convince me it was not a true one. And it is worth remarking, that the Italians, having recovered but little freedom in religion and government, are ſtill extreamly behind their neighbours, the French and Engliſh, in point of philoſophy, and retain pretty much the ſame taſte of poetry which they had two hundred years ago. Arioſto is ſtill preferred to Taſſo, and both to Homer; not only by the common run, but by thoſe who ſet up for criticks amongſt them. As if a poet were to be eſteemed excellent, in proportion as he departs from the imitation of nature, or the deficiency in that reſpect were to be compenſated by a muſical gingle and flowing combination of ſyllables.

In ſhort, my Lord, altho' truth and falſehood, right and wrong, uſeful and prejudicial, proper and improper, will ever be univerſally the ſame in themſelves, and their boundaries capable of being accurately diſtinguiſhed by human reaſon; yet the taſtes, feelings, and opinions of men, concerning any thing, muſt never be admitted as evidence of its being in itſelf good or bad: Since a very few experiments may point out to us that thoſe taſtes, depending upon various tempers, accidents and habits,

habits, are as numerous and various as the men, or ſets of men, who are actuated by them. A variety the leſs to be argued againſt, as it is manifeſtly productive of general happineſs, and in ſo great a degree that we may juſtly pronounce any ſociety of men in an unnatural ſtate, whenever they are deprived of the benefits ariſing from it. Whatever pleaſes, pleaſes; whether it be an ode of Horace, or a ſermon of Whitfield; and whoever is made happy with either, he has my moſt hearty congratulations, neither, were I willing to condemn him, ſhould I know how to go about it. But if not content with this toleration, he perſiſts in affirming that the one of theſe is in itſelf preferable to the other; I expect that he will lay aſide his taſte, and give me his reaſons. Upon ſuch like occaſions it has ſometimes, too often, happened that in default of reaſons, force, and terror have been applied, in order to produce an uniformity in thinking, and to render the taſte and opinion of the ſtrongeſt, the catholic, or univerſal. And then, woe! to the wretched ſons of Adam!

LADY MODISH.

My Lord, are you for drinking tea under the oak, or ſhall it be brought hither?

LORD

LORD MODISH.

I think, my dear, it will be pleaſanter out of doors this fine evening. Well, Colonel, I ſee this is your day; and that I am but ill prepared to be a champion for taſte. But, as Patroclus ſays to Hector, you have not long to enjoy your triumph; for to-morrow I expect Jack Maggot. He, you know, is a great *dilettante*, and full of taſte to the brim; and I doubt not of ſeeing you brought to ſhame for the complication of hereſies you have uttered this afternoon.

COL. FREEMAN.

My Lord, I accept the challenge, and deſire only a clear ſtage. Allons.